PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 261

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
FORTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1994–95

COMPRISING PERIOD
6 June—15 June 1995

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(Formed by the Rt. Hon. John Major, MP, July 1994)

Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
Lord Chancellor—The Rt. Hon. Lord Mackay of Clashfern
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
President of the Board of Trade (Secretary of State for Trade and Industry)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
Secretary of State for Defence—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
Secretary of State for the Environment—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
Secretary of State for Social Security—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Secretary of State for Scotland—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
Secretary of State for Health—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
Secretary of State for Education—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
Secretary of State for Employment—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
Secretary of State for Wales—The Rt. Hon. John Redwood, MP
Secretary of State for Transport—The Rt. Hon. Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
Secretary of State for National Heritage—The Rt. Hon. Stephen Dorrell, MP
Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Lords—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cecil of Essenden
Chief Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Jonathan Aitken, MP
Minister Without Portfolio—The Rt. Hon. Jeremy Hanley, MP

LAW OFFICERS

Attorney-General—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
Lord Advocate—The Rt. Hon. Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
Solicitor-General—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP
Solicitor-General for Scotland—Donald MacKay, Esq, QC

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
Ministers of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Rt. Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
David Davis, Esq, MP
Ministers of State, Home Office—
David Maclean, Esq, MP
The Rt. Hon. Michael Forsyth, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blatch, CBE
Financial Secretary to the Treasury—The Rt. Hon. Sir George Young, MP
Paymaster General—David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
Minister of State, Treasury—Anthony Nelson, Esq, MP
Ministers of State, Department of Trade and Industry—
Minister for Industry and Energy—The Rt. Hon. Tim Eggar, MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms—The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. Richard Needham, MP
Ministers of State, Ministry of Defence—
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—The Rt. Hon. Roger Freeman, MP
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP
Ministers of State, Department of the Environment—
Minister for Construction and Planning—The Rt. Hon. The Viscount Ullswater
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration—David Curry, Esq, MP
Ministers of State, Department of Social Security—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—William Hague, Esq, MP
The Lord Mackay of Ardbrecknish
Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—Michael Jack, Esq, MP
Minister of State, Scottish Office—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC

MINISTERS OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. Sir John Wheeler, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH—
Minister for Health—Gerald Malone, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION—Eric Forth Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT—Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—
Minister for Railways and Roads—John Watts, Esq, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Michael Jack, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—
The Earl Howe
Mrs. Angela Browning, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—The Rt. Hon. Roger Freeman, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Hon. Nicholas Soames, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—The Lord Henley

Education—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Gillian Shephard, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Eric Forth, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCHOOLS—Robin Squire, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION—Timothy Boswell, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Michael Portillo, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Miss Ann Widdecombe, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
James Paice, Esq, MP
The Hon. Phillip Oppenheim, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Construction and Planning—The Rt. Hon. The Viscount Ullswater
Minister for the Environment and Countryside—Robert Atkins, Esq, MP
Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration—David Curry, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Robert B. Jones, Esq, MP
Sir Paul Beresford, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Chalker of Wallasey
The Rt. Hon. Alastair Goodlad, MP
The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hogg, QC, MP
David Davis, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Tony Baldry, Esq, MP

Health—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH—The Rt. Hon. Virginia Bottomley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Health—Gerald Malone, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Hon. Tom Sackville, MP
The Baroness Cumberlege, CBE
John Bowis, Esq, OBE, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Michael Howard, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
David Maclean, Esq, MP
The Rt. Hon. Michael Forsyth, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Blatch, CBE
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Nicholas Baker, Esq, MP

Law Officers' Department —
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Nicholas Lyell, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Derek Spencer, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Rodger of Earlsferry, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Donald MacKay, Esq, QC

Lord Chancellor's Department—
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mackay of Clashfern
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—John M. Taylor, Esq, MP

National Heritage—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NATIONAL HERITAGE—The Rt. Hon. Stephen Dorrell, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Iain Sproat, Esq, MP
The Viscount Astor

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. Sir John Wheeler, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
The Baroness Denton of Wakefield, CBE
Malcolm Moss, Esq, MP

Paymaster General's Office—
PAYMASTER GENERAL—David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cecil of Essenden

Public Service and Science, Office of—
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. David Hunt, MBE, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—John Horam, Esq, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Ian Lang, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Fraser of Carmyllie, QC
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Lord James Douglas-Hamilton, MP
George Kynoch, Esq, MP
Sir Hector Monro, MP

Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SECURITY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Lilley, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Social Security and Disabled People—William Hague, Esq, MP
The Lord Mackay of Ardbrecknish
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alistair Burt, Esq, MP
James Arbuthnot, Esq, MP
Roger Evans, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE (SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY)—The Rt. Hon. Michael Heseltine, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Industry and Energy—The Rt. Hon. Tim Eggar, MP
Minister for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms—The Rt. Hon. The Earl Ferrers
Minister for Trade—The Rt. Hon. Richard Needham, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CORPORATE AFFAIRS—Jonathan Evans, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDUSTRY AND ENERGY—Richard Page, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY—Ian Taylor, Esq, MBE, MP

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—
Minister for Railways and Roads—John Watts, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Steve Norris, Esq, MP (Minister for Transport in London)
The Viscount Goschen (Minister for Aviation and Shipping)

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. John Major, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Jonathan Aitken, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Sir George Young, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL—David Heathcoat-Amory, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Anthony Nelson, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. Richard Ryder, OBE, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Timothy Wood, Esq, MP
Timothy Kirkhope, Esq, MP
Andrew Mackay, Esq, MP
Derek Conway, Esq, MP
Andrew Mitchell, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Simon Burns, Esq, MP
David Willetts, Esq, MP
Michael Bates, Esq, MP
Dr. Liam Fox, MP
Bowen Wells, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. John Redwood, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Gwilym Jones, Esq, MP
Roderick Richards, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, KT, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Viscount Ridley, KG, GCVO, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Lord Somerleyton, KCVO
TREASURER—Greg Knight, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—David Lightbown, Esq, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Sydney Chapman, Esq, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Lord Strathclyde
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMAN OF THE GUARD—The Lord Inglewood
LORDS IN WAITING—The Viscount Long, CBE, The Lord Lucas, The Earl of Lindsay
BARONESSES IN WAITING—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Trumpington
The Baroness Miller, MBE

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Alison, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—The Rt. Hon. Betty Boothroyd, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt. Hon. Michael Morris, Esq, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Geoffrey Lofthouse, Esq, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Dame Janet Fookes, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—

Roland Boyes, Esq, MP, Frank Cook, Esq, MP, Sir Patrick Cormack, MP, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, MP, Alan Haselhurst, Esq, MP, Robert Hicks, Esq, MP, James Hill, Esq, MP, Norman Hogg, Esq, MP, Roy Hughes, Esq, MP, Sir John Hunt, MP, Barry Jones, Esq, MP, Sir David Knox, MP, John McWilliam, Esq, MP, Michael J. Martin, Esq, MP, John Maxton, Esq, MP, Iain Mills, Esq, MP, Edward O'Hara, Esq, MP, Sir Giles Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Roger Sims, Esq, MP, Patrick Thompson, Esq, MP, Mrs. Ann Winterton, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

The Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), The Rt. Hon. Alan Beith, MP, The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP, John Garrett, Esq, MP, The Rt. Hon. Tony Newton, OBE, MP, Mrs. Ann Taylor, MP

SECRETARY OF THE COMMISSION—R. W. G. Wilson

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—

D. W. Limon, CB, (Chairman), Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG, Miss J. B. Tanfield, J. Rodda, FCA, I. D. Church, Mrs. S. J. Harrison

SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT—B. A. Wilson

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—N. Bevan, CB

ASSISTANT SECRETARY TO THE SPEAKER—Mrs. M. E. Thomson

TRAINBEARER—D. J. Lord, MBE

DEPUTY TRAINBEARER—P. L. Warwick

DIARY SECRETARY—Mrs. S. Norvell

SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon D. C. Gray, TD, PhD

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Ms P. A. Helme

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL

SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—J. S. Mason, CB, T. J. G. Pratt, CB

SPEAKER'S ASSISTANT COUNSEL—A. Akbar

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—D. W. Limon, CB

CLERK ASSISTANT—W. R. McKay CLERK OF COMMITTEES—J. F. Sweetman, CB, TD

PRINCIPAL CLERKS—

C. B. Winnifrith (Table Office)
R. B. Sands (Public Bills)
G. Cubie (Overseas Office)
A. J. Hastings (Journal Office)
R. J. Willoughby (Private Bills)
D. G. Millar (Select Committees)
M. R. Jack, PhD (Standing Committees)
R. W. G. Wilson (Domestic Committees)
W. A. Proctor (Financial Committees)
Ms H. E. Irwin (Select Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—S. A. L. Panton, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms A. Milner-Barry, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, D. W. N. Doig, D. L. Natzler, E. P. Silk, A. R. Kennon, L. C. Laurence Smyth, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, R. G. James, PhD D. R. Lloyd, B. M. Hutton

SENIOR CLERKS—Ms P. A. Helme, J. S. Benger, DPhil, Miss E. C. Samson, N. P. Walker, M. D. Hamlyn, P. C. Seaward, DPhil, C. G. Lee, C. D. Stanton, A. Y. A. Azad, C. A. Shaw, Ms L. M. Gardner, K. J. Brown, D. Steel (acting), P. E. Bolton (acting), Mrs E. A. J. Attridge (acting), A. M. Kidner (acting)

CLERKS OF DOMESTIC COMMITTEES—P. G. Moon, M. Clark

ASSISTANT CLERKS— P. M. Hensher, F. J. Reid, M. Hennessy, G. R. Devine, Mrs. J. N. St. J. Mulley, T. W. P. Healey, Miss S. A. R. Adams, K. C. Fox, J. D. W. Rhys, Ms J. A. Long

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss R. J. Challis, S. D. Barrett, Miss S. J. Fox

COMPUTER SUPPORT OFFICER—G. C. Peek

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—L. L. Kaye, A. P. Hubner, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, Miss A. M. Loader, Miss F. L. Allingham, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, J. A. L. Dresner, M. P. Oxborough, N. P. Wright, Ms C. M. Genis, Mrs. C. Oxborough, R. W. A. Barrand, A. Catinella, Miss E. Segal, Miss A. Fuki

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—C. B. Dibben, V. A. A. Mengot, R. J. Gartside, A. G. Brazier, R. P. Derecki, R. A. Nash, R. D. May, Ms M. Manku, Mrs. C. L. Hand, D. Griffiths

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—B. Tidball, DEPUTY—Miss L. Lewis, ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, J. Puricelli, K. B. Wood, P. D. Howlett, Mrs. L. R. Shade, P. A. Jack, P. L. J. Sullivan

SECRETARIES—Mrs. G. E. C. Sclater, MBE (Clerk of the House), Mrs. S. D. Pamphlett, Miss S. P. Chubb, Mrs. D. Gent, Miss A. T. Power, Miss D. J. Somers, Mrs. K. J. Georgiou, Miss L. Young, Mrs. H. Agnew, Mrs. J. Stott, Mrs. A. M. Douglas, Miss K. McClelland, Mrs. B. Hunter, Mrs. A. M. Allen, Mrs. N. Mulloy, Mrs. S. Marshall

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—R. J. Willoughby, B. P. Keith

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. J. Willoughby TAXING OFFICER—R. J. Willoughby

SUPERINTENDING CLERK—R. A. Broomfield

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—J. Hole, Mrs. D. B. Nelson, P. A. Derrett, I. A. Blair, B. Dye, J. H. Davies, Ms E. C. G. Partridge, Miss A. Burt (temporary)

Vote Office—

DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster

DEPUTY DELIVERERS OF THE VOTE—J. F. Collins (Distribution), F. W. Hallett (Production)

ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney BOOKSHOP MANAGER—C. D. Lister

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—B. G. Underwood, Ms K. M. Barker

SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—Mrs. S. Fuzio, A. J. Ashton

VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—G. E. Howard, C. P. Williams, P. Hannett, J. Harrington, M. D. Cook, J. E. Lawford, Miss V. Frewin, S. Haher, P. Smith, Mrs. J. Forsyth

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Sir Alan Urwick, KCVO, CMG

DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. N. W. Jennings

ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins

DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANTS AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright, J. M. Robertson

CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss S. J. Scott Thomson

ADMISSION ORDER OFFICE—A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren, A. J. Spencer

PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—C. E. Gray DEPUTY PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPERS—D. Shiels, R. J. Tyack

SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—J. Town, J. W. Kirman, L. Outram, R. G. Sterne, P. E. Overfield

HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—Mrs. J. Pay SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—V. M. Roccia, C. R. Harris, BEM, B. Mulvihill, L. Stockwell

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT MANAGER—Miss S. John

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH MANAGER—Mrs. M. Mainland NURSING SISTER—Miss K. Anderson

PARLIAMENTARY WORKS DIRECTORATE—

DIRECTOR OF WORKS—H. P. Webber, CEng, FICE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF WORKS—B. C. Sewell, ARICS

PRINCIPAL WORKS OFFICERS—A. Makepeace, R. Bentley, MIFireE, SIRM, G. Goode, B. R. Hall, FRICS, C. Hillier, CEng, FIMech.E., MIEE, M. Moone, J. F. Moore, ARICS, M. Trott, M. J. Thompson, CEng, MICE

SENIOR PROFESSIONAL OFFICERS—C. Brown, ARICS, C. Cowell, RIBA, J. Eaton, CEng, MCIBSE, T. Fox, CEng, MCIBSE, S. Howard, T. Jardine, TD, RIBA, B. O'Boyle, J. Stone, FRICS

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—A. Blake DEPUTY COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. S. Morrison

PASS OFFICE—M. Coombs

DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—Miss J. B. Tanfield
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—Miss P. J. Baines, B.Litt
LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—S. Z. Young, K. G. Cuninghame
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS (Heads of Section)—Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FIInfSc, C. C. Pond, PhD, Mrs. C. B. Andrews, R. C. Clements, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, R. J. Ware, DPhil, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, Mrs. C. M. Gillie, R. J. Twigger, Mrs. G. L. Allen
LIBRARY CLERKS, SENIOR—Ms F. Poole, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, CStat, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss B. McInnes, B. K. Winetrobe, Miss M. Baber, Ms A. Walker, Mrs. H. V. Holden, Mrs. P. L. Carling, Miss J. Seaton, FLA, A. J. L. Crompton, Miss P. Strickland, Miss V. A. Miller, Ms H. M. Jeffs, M. P. Hillyard, Ms J. Roll, S. A. Wise (period)
ASSISTANT—Ms W. T. Wilson, E. H. Wood, Miss N. J. Chedgey, M. Nawaz, P. Bowers, PhD, T. E. Dodd, A. C. Seely, Ms J. K. Dyson, Miss. F. M. Watson, MPhil, G. Danby, PhD, W. F. Lea, PhD, Miss P. M. Hughes, PhD, B. C. Morgan, Ms K. S. Wright, J. Vernon, Miss L. A. Conway, C. Blair, PhD, Dr. J. E. L. Cushion (period), G. Vidler (temporary)
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Ms F. Whittle, P. W. Skerratt, J. A. Prince, MLS (acting)
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—K. N. H. Parry, ALA, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Miss I. O. White, ALA, Miss G. L. Cooper, Mrs. D. W. Clark, ALA
EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. C. Weeds; ASSISTANT—Mrs. C. C. O'Connor
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—E. L. V. MacGregor, Ms B. A. Rowlands, ALA, J. P. Brevitt, Miss C. M. Owens
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. P. V. Wiles, Miss M. H. Fletcher, Mrs. G. C. Brown, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Ms H. Armstrong, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Mrs. E. H. Riley, ALA, Mrs. F. M. Ward, Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, T. C. Holmes, C. M. Sear, Ms J. B. Hall, ALA, R. Freebury, ALA, A. D. Parker, ALA, Miss G. Rose, Mrs. J. Priestley, Miss C. M. R. Chambers, Miss C. M. Blair, ALA (acting)
EDITOR, WEEKLY BULLETIN—D. B. Inns
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—P. E. M. Ward, Mrs. J. M. Smith, ALA, Miss J. Lyall, ALA, Ms Z. A. Smallwood, Miss D. J. Gillings, Miss P. Rix, Miss S. Pepin, ALA, R. O. Steeden, G. G. Newell, Miss A. Hatton, Miss V. S. Spratt, Miss K. E. Susilovic, Ms J. Davies, P. D. Banks, G. Howard, Mrs. A. Brooking (temporary), Miss J. Bacchus (temporary)
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss N. Harland, Mrs. A. J. H. Mara, D. A. Brown, M. Greenhill (Head Library Attendant), B. Smith, Ms J. Fessey, A. J. Fuller, Mrs. J. M. Morrissey, Mrs. H. Onyskiw, A. Clark, Miss A. Gual, Ms M. A. Moulton, Miss N. M. Sutherland, Mrs. C. Millar, Mrs. P. M. Burnett, P. R. Mann, Miss A. O. Creevy, Ms D. Gallagher, Miss V. J. White, Ms S. K. Priddy, Ms L. F. Magee (acting)

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

DIRECTOR—J. Rodda, FCA
FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—A. R. Marskell
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—M. Fletcher ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—Mrs. G. Crowther, A. A. Cameron
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—N. P. Crawley, Miss R. Harrison
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Mrs. J. Peach, Mrs. G. M. Baker, Ms M. R. Morris, G. L. Turner, Miss D. M. McGuire, Mrs. S. M. Chalmers, D. M. Allen
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss D. E. Johnson, D. J. D. Woods, Ms P. R. Mills, Miss S. V. A. Weaver, P. H. Olden, A. D. Rowlands, P. J. S. French, Miss M. Oliver, R. A. P. Edwards, Mrs. C. J. Stockton, A. C. Martin, Miss R. Brooks, V. Fernandez, Ms G. Jessiman (temporary)
FINANCE OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—M. J. Barram, IPFA, MBCS
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—Ms S. Peterson, IPFA
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. N. Norman,
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Ms K. Bigwood, P. F. Barratt
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—Miss T. D. Ruewell, Miss V. E. Wilson, P. F. Dawson, I. Montgomery, Ms B. Parekh, Ms S. Pratt, Ms T. Myers, Miss N. J. H. Price, T. White
ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—B. A. Wilson DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
HEAD OF THE POLICY/PROJECT UNIT—Ms S. Leeming, MPhil, FIPM
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss P. J. Hurford HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. J. Leverton
PERSONNEL OFFICE MANAGER—M. Page EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss C. E. Jackson
PERSONNEL OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, Mrs. R. A. Baker, Mrs. A. McGuinn, Miss T. J. West, Miss J. O'Mahoney
COMPUTER OFFICE—
COMPUTER OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc NETWORK PLANNING OFFICER—J. Fishenden, MIDPN, MIAP
COMPUTER SUPPORT OFFICER—Miss M. Morrison (temporary) NETWORK SUPPORT OFFICER—Mrs. J. M. Cleveland
COMPUTER SUPPORT MANAGER—M. Luckins (temporary) EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—C. J. Bumstead, P. D. Welsh
COMMON SERVICES UNIT—
HEAD OF UNIT—J. A. Robb HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell
INTERNAL AUDITOR—R. H. A. Russell, ACMA SENIOR AUDITOR—S. J. Lewis SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Mrs. D. C. Hill
TRAINEE AUDITOR—Miss R. A. Smith
STAFF INSPECTOR—R. C. Collins, HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—R. T. Castle TRADE UNION SIDE ADMINISTRATOR—D. R. Sands
WELFARE OFFICER—Mrs. A. Mossop

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—I. D. Church
DEPUTY EDITOR—P. Walker
PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—J. Gourley, W. G. Garland, Miss H. A. Hales, Miss L. Sutherland
ASSISTANT EDITORS—Ms C. V. Grainger, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, S. M. Hutchinson, C. Fogarty, Miss V. A. Widgery, Ms K. Stewart, P. Hadlow
COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—D. Crosswell, Mrs. A. M. Browne, Mrs. H. J. G. Natzler, Mrs. A. Street, L. Gilmore, Miss C. Hanly, M. Watson, J. Ransley, Mrs. E. J. Gregory, Ms J. Dall, Ms P. Kelly, Miss K. Myers, Ms J. Warrington, Ms D. Jones, Mrs. J. Symons (temporary)
REPORTERS—Miss E. Morris, Mrs J. L. Davies, Miss J. Goodman, Miss J. Levy, K. Gall, Ms V. Wilson, A. Roberts, F. A. Minichiello, Ms B. Robins
IT MANAGERS—Miss J. L. Brown, R. Daniels
PRINCIPAL HANSARD ADMINISTRATOR—Miss R. Washington
SENIOR HANSARD ADMINISTRATORS—Mrs. M. J. Harding, J. Brake, S. O'Riordan
HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGER—Mrs. M. Garland
ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—A. E. Thompson

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

DIRECTOR OF CATERING SERVICES—Mrs. S. J. Harrison, MHCIMA
OPERATIONS MANAGER—N. M. Hutson, MHCIMA
CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA
EXECUTIVE CHEF—D. Dorricot
PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATOR—Mrs. S. M. Nicholls, FHCIMA, MIPD
CATERING MANAGER, HOUSE OF COMMONS—P. Gale, MHCIMA
HEAD CHEF—L. J. Colmer
CATERING MANAGER, BELLAMY'S—Ms S. Hovells, LHCIMA
BANQUETING MANAGER—C. J. Griffiths
ASSISTANT BANQUETING MANAGER—
ASSISTANT CATERING MANAGER—M. W. E. Johnson
ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley
SYSTEMS MANAGER—D. Capstick, MHCIMA
PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO THE DIRECTOR OF CATERING SERVICES—Ms B. Woodiwiss
ASSISTANT CATERING MANAGER, MILLBANK—M. Simons

OTHER PRINCIPAL OFFICERS

CLERK OF THE CROWN IN CHANCERY—Sir Thomas Legg KCB, QC
COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL—Sir John Bourn KCB
PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSIONER FOR ADMINISTRATION—W. K. Reid CB

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. P. J. Woolgar
HEAD OF SECURITY—Superintendent C. M. Harris
DEPUTY HEAD OF SECURITY—Superintendent R. Wood
POSTMASTER—J. Arnold
TRANSPORT MANAGER—J. W. Jones
SUPERVISOR OF PARLIAMENTARY BROADCASTING—Miss M. E. Douglas, OBE
DIRECTOR OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY—Dr. M. G. Norton

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FIFTY-FIRST PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 27 APRIL 1992]

FORTY-FOURTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 261**

TWELFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1994–95

House of Commons

Tuesday 6 June 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

Bosnia

1. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on British forces' deployments in Bosnia. [25091]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): The reinforcement of the British contingent in Bosnia is continuing with the deployment of some 1,000 additional personnel, including two artillery batteries and an armoured engineer squadron. In addition, we have offered 24 Airmobile Brigade to the United Nations as part of the rapid reaction force.

Mr. Arnold: As the force leaves for Bosnia it takes with it from the House not only our concern but our pride in its professionalism. Does not its dispatch speak louder than words in sending the message that the United Nations will not give way to blackmail? And is not it significant that yet again Britain is giving the lead?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is entitled to make those remarks. The Bosnian Serb leadership would do well to reflect on the fact that the taking of hostages has not only resulted in international contempt but has had the direct consequence of the dispatch of what in due course will be two additional brigades to protect the United Nations force. That justifies my hon. Friend's comments.

Mr. Skinner: Why does not the Secretary of State have the guts to admit that sending that force is all about ensuring that it brings back the thousands of other troops who are already there? The tactic is withdrawal. The Government want to sound macho, but the truth is that they will pull the soldiers out.

Mr. Rifkind: Not for the first time, the hon. Gentleman is wrong. It is our belief—and, I think, a view shared on both sides of the House—that the United Nations force continues to do important and valuable work in Bosnia. It is highly desirable that it should continue that, and the purpose of sending the additional forces is to provide those troops with the protection necessary to achieve that objective.

Sir Peter Fry: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that sending even more forces will not necessarily improve the situation or the protection of our troops already in Bosnia, unless we alter the rules of engagement? Does he know whether the United Nations will change the instructions that it gives to the forces in Bosnia under its control, so that our troops can more effectively defend themselves against actions such as those that the Serbs have taken in recent weeks?

Mr. Rifkind: For obvious operational reasons it has never been our practice to comment on the detail of the rules of engagement. However, I can tell my hon. Friend that of course we are determined to ensure that our forces have available to them whatever will be required to maximise their protection. If ever that were believed to require a change in the rules of engagement we would not hesitate to agree to one on that basis.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: In view of the difficulties experienced in the past with the dual key, especially in connection with NATO air strikes, may I ask the Secretary of State about the command and control of the additional

forces to be sent? Whose authority does General Rupert Smith have if he wishes to deploy the additional forces, and according to what criteria will he do so? In particular, whose authority would he require if he wished to raise the siege of Sarajevo?

Mr. Rifkind: The additional forces being sent to Bosnia, both British forces and those from other countries, will come under the authority of the United Nations and therefore under both General Smith and General Janvier, as the two UN force commanders in the field. The use of those forces is a matter for the discretion of the UN commanders, but it must be consistent with the terms of the mandate laid down by the Security Council.

Sir Patrick Cormack: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there will be widespread support for his robust statements this afternoon, especially in answer to the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner)? What is the latest position regarding the hostages, and has Mr. Karadzic been told that we remain absolutely resolute in our demand that they be released?

Mr. Rifkind: The House will be aware that a significant number of hostages were released a couple of days ago. Strong indications have emerged this morning that there may be a further release of hostages during the afternoon, but we must wait and see. The United Kingdom Government will not relax their pressure by one iota until every single UN hostage has been released safe and in good health.

Dr. David Clark: The whole House was relieved to hear that some hostages had been released, and we are hopeful that we will get some good news later today. We share the Government's view, and we will not satisfied until every single hostage has been released without any conditions whatsoever. While I am not asking the Secretary of State for precise details, will he explain his strategic view to ensure that British troops are not put in a position in the future in which they can be taken hostage?

Mr. Rifkind: We indicated in an announcement a week or so ago that we believed that there was a powerful case for a concentration of the UN presence in Bosnia. That is particularly important with regard to the exposed position of UN military observers, and it also has implications for the difficult task faced by those soldiers—not British—who are involved in the weapons control centres. It is also relevant to the future of the enclaves and to the possibility of supplying the UN forces in the enclaves with the fuel and food which are crucial to their continuing presence and their ability to carry out the role for which they were sent.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the robust stand made by the Government and by the Prime Minister on Bosnia deserves the admiration and support of the whole country? Is he aware that they are certainly enjoying that support in my constituency in Lincolnshire? Will he again state unequivocally that, whatever happens in this or any other context, the Government will never give in to threats or blackmail?

Mr. Rifkind: The public expect, and are entitled to expect, that no British Government would respond to a hostage situation by making concessions to those responsible for the taking of hostages. We have shown in the past that that is a fundamental British view which remains in the present circumstances.

Local Authority Discussions

3. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with local authorities in the last year about changes to the size of the defence industry. [25094]

The Minister of State for Defence Procurement (Mr. Roger Freeman): We seek to involve local authorities in early notification of any change to defence requirements for land and buildings and seek their help in finding alternative use when no longer required.

Mr. Miller: Does the Minister agree that local authorities are the key to planning economic activities at some disused military bases? Will he address his mind to the possibility of linking local authorities with plans to utilise currently vacant Ministry of Defence houses and other accommodation to help provide that accommodation for communal civic use? Do not some of the examples from the United States provide models for the MOD to follow?

Mr. Freeman: I am not sure about the experiences in the United States, which have been mixed. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the Ministry of Defence should seek to co-operate with local authorities, trade unions and other Government Departments through the regional offices to make sure that there is prompt action to find alternative uses for land and buildings which are no longer needed. We need to reduce the stock of empty married quarters, and we will work with local authorities to achieve that.

Mr. Hicks: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is eager anticipation within the Plymouth travel-to-work area that an early decision will be made about the release of land currently occupied by the Royal Naval college at Manadon, and that the beneficiary will be the University of Plymouth?

Mr. Freeman: I cannot confirm who the beneficiary will be, but I agree with my hon. Friend that further or higher education use for the site would make a great deal of sense and would be welcomed in Plymouth.

Procurement Fraud

4. **Mr. McAvoy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's estimate of the amount of procurement fraud committed against his Department in the last five years; and what steps he has taken to limit this. [25095]

Mr. Freeman: In the last five years identified procurement fraud was approximately £1.8 million, most of which relates to the Foxley case. The recent report by the National Audit Office recorded that my Department had made good progress in its efforts to reduce the risk of fraud in defence procurement by measures such as more and better training of staff.

Mr. McAvoy: Bearing in mind the concerns expressed by the National Audit Office, can the Minister confirm that all the corrupt funds in the Gordon Foxley case have been identified? Despite his assurances about the response of the Department, is he entirely sure that the MOD is assiduously learning the lessons of the Gordon Foxley case to prevent a repeat of the financial waste, the damage to employment and the long-term damage to Britain's defence industry which have been the results of that case?

Mr. Freeman: I cannot assure the hon. Gentleman that we have traced all the funds, partly because of the nature

of banking laws and regulations in Switzerland. Our present estimate is £1.5 million but the sums may be much more—possibly as much as twice that amount. I cannot give the hon. Gentleman precise figures, as it is far too early.

On the lessons learnt, the Department is continually improving its methods of training staff. Although £1.8 million is a significant sum over five years, it is a small fraction of the £40 billion which the Department would have spent on procurement in the past five years. Compared with industrial and commercial companies in the private sector, the Defence Ministry's record is good. It must continue to improve, but we have set in train steps to improve the quality of the training of staff to identify fraud.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it sticks in the gullet of most taxpayers that, having short-changed us as an employee, Mr. Gordon Foxley then proceeded to get £160,000 in legal aid? Is not something wrong somewhere?

Mr. Freeman: That is not a matter for me, but the sentiments of many in the House would probably be the same as those of my hon. Friend.

Dr. David Clark: How does the Minister justify rewarding companies that have perpetrated fraud? How does he justify awarding the M107 shell contract to Simmel, a company that was involved in the Foxley-Taylor fraud scandal and which is co-owned with Borletti, which was a major player in that fraud? Does the Minister understand the anger among British workers who have lost their jobs because foreign firms have fraudulently bribed MOD officials and, as a result, are now out of work while those same companies are being given contracts?

Mr. Freeman: The Ministry of Defence and the Procurement Executive in particular are extremely annoyed at the actions of the three European companies and we have taken action against them: first, to recover the moneys paid in bribes; and, secondly, to suspend procurement decisions with those three companies for a time. But because the management involved in the Foxley case has now left the companies, it is not in the interests of the taxpayer to ban dealings with those companies for ever.

Ex-service Women

5. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many ex-service women are affected by the recent industrial tribunal decision on voluntary redundancy. [25096]

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. Nicholas Soames): In all, 54 women who were made redundant under the third tranche of the Army redundancy scheme received special capital payments which were lower than those of their male counterparts.

Ms Eagle: I thank the Minister for that answer. I was pleased to see, in recent answers to parliamentary questions tabled by me, the Ministry's commitment to equal opportunities. Will the Minister explain why his Department seems to be so terrible at carrying them out? Why must we see the Ministry being dragged before the courts time and again over the dismissal of women who have become pregnant, for example, and in cases such as this? When will the Ministry undertake a proper review and ensure that discrimination against women is wiped out from its administration so that we can be proud of an equal opportunities policy rather than regard it as just a sop?

Mr. Soames: As usual from the Opposition, the hon. Lady presents a travesty of the position in the armed forces, which is a shining example of equal opportunity. There is not a branch of the services in which women do not undertake the most significant, responsible and valuable role. Where discrimination exists, it will be dealt with. In this case, we believed that what we were doing was fair and not discriminatory. The court has ruled against us and we are moving to put the matter right. But the picture portrayed by the hon. Lady is a travesty which will cause great offence to all those women who serve so honourably and well, and with such distinction, in our armed forces.

Mr. Wilkinson: Although I congratulate my hon. Friend on ensuring that women have full opportunity for fruitful careers in the armed forces, has not subordination of British law to European by Her Majesty's Government's application to the armed forces of the European Union equal opportunities directive cost the British taxpayer £50 million in compensation for ex-service women, who have been dismissed on the ground of pregnancy? Will he ensure that that precedent is not followed in the case of homosexuals in the armed forces?

Mr. Soames: For a start, I do not intend to follow my hon. Friend's prejudices. Plainly, we are a proper equal opportunities employer—not in the politically correct sense—because we value the services that those people have to offer in the same way as we value all the members of the armed forces. We will respect, continue to respect and always have respected the judgments of the laws of the land.

Mr. Martlew: Perhaps the Minister can help me about discrimination against women in the armed forces. Will he examine the policy that dictates that women serving overseas are always posted back to the United Kingdom on their return to service from maternity leave? Often that policy has the effect of splitting the family, because the husband is normally on an overseas posting. The Minister professes to be in favour of equal opportunities, so when will he stop presiding over policies that blatantly disregard and discriminate against women?

Mr. Soames: Sometimes the hon. Gentleman has a confusion about priorities in defence. He should understand that the services take their responsibility extremely seriously. If there is a problem, I shall have it investigated, but let us not try to pretend that the hon. Gentleman raises such cases for any other reason than to curry favour. It is absolutely idiotic stuff. To try to portray the services as not being in favour of equal opportunities across the board is fatuous nonsense.

Mr. Robathan: Further to the question from the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), does my hon. Friend agree that the people of this country demand that the

armed forces are capable of defending the country and that they are not interested in all the politically correct claptrap we hear from the Opposition?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend, who has considerable and high quality experience as a soldier, speaks the truth and all those sensible ordinary people in the country know it to be the truth. They value our armed services for what they are—not as a political puppet, as the Labour party tries to use them.

Rev. Martin Smyth: Although I understand that an equal opportunities programme operates within the armed services, does the Minister accept that some form of discrimination exists when soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment are involuntarily discharged? Some of them should be discharged because they are suffering from medical conditions. The failure to do that means that the future livelihoods of those soldiers are being endangered because they have no medical discharge from the Army.

Mr. Soames: I do not know the details of the case that the hon. Gentleman makes, but if he cares to let me have the details, I shall have them investigated at once.

Defence Costs Study

6. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the efficiency gains arising from the defence costs study process in his Department. [25097]

Mr. Rifkind: The defence costs study was a great success. We now estimate that the measures arising from or related to the DCS will result in annual savings in excess of £1 billion by the end of the decade.

Mr. Milburn: How can the Minister claim success in reducing inefficiency when his Department continues to waste public money hand over fist; for example, £2 billion overspent on the Eurofighter project; £800 million overspent on the Trident works programme and £7 billion wasted in total in the past two years? Is it not a national scandal that financial incompetence and mismanagement continue to be the order of the day in his Department when defence jobs and defence budgets are being cut?

Mr. Rifkind: If the Labour party wants to conduct a campaign on the basis of waste in the Ministry of Defence, it really should do its homework a little better than it has.

In the recent document published by the hon. Gentleman's friends, they claimed as a supreme example of Ministry of Defence waste the fact that the costs of the Challenger tank programme had increased by £920 million. They appeared to be unaware that the £920 million was the cost of the extra 259 Challenger 2 tanks that we announced some months ago, which were warmly welcomed by the Army.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the savings that have been achieved are substantial, and that any large organisation—which is what the Ministry of Defence is—can always make savings and improve efficiency? However, would it be right to say that much of the saving has been achieved because of the reductions, and that if we are considering, as we may well in future, enlarging, for example, the volunteer reserves and the cadet force, it may be wise not to reduce their structures and command situations until the decisions on expansion, if any, are taken?

Mr. Rifkind: We have borne those considerations very much in mind in the decisions that we have announced with regard to the Territorial Army, the other reserve forces and the cadet forces, which are being maintained at their present levels. I can also tell my hon. Friend that what was unique about the "Front Line First" study was that we excluded, from the beginning of that consideration, any proposals the effect of which might be to reduce the operational effectiveness of our armed forces.

Devonport Dockyard

7. **Mr. Jamieson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the terms and conditions of the employees of Devonport dockyard will remain the same after the privatisation of Her Majesty's royal dockyards. [25100]

Mr. Freeman: That is a matter for Devonport Royal Dockyard plc, its employees and their representatives.

Mr. Jamieson: Does the Minister recall his Department's repeated assurances to the employees of Devonport dockyard, in answers to Members of Parliament and in a written answer to me on 23 May 1995, that terms and conditions would not be changed without the prior consent of the work force? Does he not understand the anxiety and sense of betrayal of the work force—people who have served the country loyally and long—now that they have heard that, contrary to the documents of the invitation for tender, the terms and conditions can now be changed?

Will the Minister give the House and the workers of the dockyards a categorical guarantee that their rights to pensions and redundancy payments will be guaranteed after privatisation?

Mr. Freeman: The position on accrued benefits, either for redundancy payments or pensions, is of course safeguarded. Future accruals of such rights for future service are a matter for proper negotiation between the employer and the trustees, for example, of the pension scheme, and the employees and their representatives as far as the redundancy scheme is concerned. If the hon. Gentleman is seriously interested in preserving the interests of those who work at Plymouth, Devonport, he should be distancing himself from the 58 Labour Members who want to scrap Trident.

Mr. Fatchett: Is not the fate of Devonport and Rosyth typical of the Government's privatisation programme—millions of pounds wasted on consultants' fees in preparing for privatisation, job insecurity for those working in the dockyards who have served the country well for so long and now doubts about the defence capability of the Government's proposals?

Is it not time to admit that Minister's policy on that aspect, as in so many other respects, is a total shambles? Would it not make sense to withdraw from that privatisation? It is not wanted, it is not necessary and it will damage the country.

Mr. Freeman: The Government side of the House proceeds on a principle very different from that on which the hon. Gentleman proceeds; the defence industry is there

to provide the right equipment and the right service for the armed forces of the country, not to provide employment, either in Devonport or in Rosyth.

The best way forward for the dockyards, in the Government's judgment, is in the private sector, because that way they will provide the most efficient service and the best chance of attracting further work.

Pacific (China)

8. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what estimate he has made of Chinese military ambitions in the Pacific region; and if he will make a statement. [25101]

Mr. Rifkind: China has long-standing territorial claims in the Asia Pacific region and significant military forces, which are being modernised. We hope that all territorial disputes in the region can be settled amicably, and without resort to force.

Mr. MacShane: Is the Secretary of State aware that China is rearming itself at a speed not witnessed since the German and Italian rearmaments of the 1930s? Is he further aware that, in the past two or three weeks, China has tested nuclear weapons in defiance of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and tested intercontinental ballistic missiles which can be launched from lorries? Is he further aware that the Chinese navy is transforming itself from a coastal defence fleet into a blue water fleet and is actually involved in military engagements, many hundreds of miles from the China coast? That action has been taken by a non-democratic, totalitarian power which is seriously destabilising Asia. What are Britain's short, medium and long-term policies with regard to that new threat to the world?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will forgive me if, in the time available, I am unable to give a comprehensive answer to what is a very reasonable question. He is certainly correct to emphasise that China is expanding its military potential very substantially. We have noted particularly the testing of the intercontinental ballistic missile which we understand could have a range in excess of 6,500 km and thus would be able to target western Europe in due course. The matter clearly justifies serious attention in the months ahead.

Housing Stock

9. **Mr. Patchett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received in the last six months in respect of his Department's empty housing stock. [25102]

Mr. Soames: My Department has received numerous representations from hon. Members and from other interested parties about empty housing.

Mr. Patchett: Does the Minister agree that it is simply outrageous that so many houses should remain vacant while so many people are homeless? Why cannot the Government get their act together and provide proper housing for our armed forces and use any excess housing for the homeless of this country?

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman makes the perfectly fair point that we have too many empty married quarters. We have currently more than 13,000 vacant married quarters, of which about 4,000 are being sold or leased and approximately 9,000 are service stock.

However, the House should remember that service housing stock must meet the special and unique needs of the armed forces, and that the lowest practical level of vacant properties will always be greater than that of local authorities or housing associations. That said, we acknowledge that we need to do better, and we will do better.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: My hon. Friend is currently considering a major disposal of 240 married quarters at the former flying school at RAF Rissington situated at the top of the Cotswolds which will have a major impact on my constituency. Will my hon. Friend please take full account of the views of local people, and particularly the views of the Cotswold district council and not merely sell the site to the highest bidder?

Mr. Soames: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the very forceful presentation of his case. If he will be good enough to get in touch with me and let me know what the views of the Cotswold district council are, I shall be happy to examine them.

Service Personnel

10. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel are stationed in (a) Wales, (b) Scotland and (c) England. [25103]

Mr. Soames: The latest available figures for United Kingdom Regular forces show just over 4,800 service personnel stationed in Wales, some 18,400 in Scotland and 156,500 in England.

Mr. Griffiths: Does the Minister agree that Wales is very hard done by in the deployment of defence resources? When examining the future configuration of defence forces in the United Kingdom, will the Minister move out of the Napoleonic age and bring about a fairer adjustment of resources and ensure, in particular, that Wales does not suffer any more from this Government's depredation of our defence forces?

Mr. Soames: That is a typically optimistic Welsh view. It is important that we deploy our forces in such a way as to meet our requirements in the most operationally effective manner. The Welsh have very proud traditions and links with our armed forces, for example, through the Royal Welch Fusiliers, the Royal Regiment of Wales, the Welsh Guards and the Queen's Dragoon Guards. Three ships are affiliated with Welsh towns and major defence industries and airforce bases are located in Wales. Wales is not badly done by. However, I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. Of course, we are always mindful of helping where we can and we always have regard to operational requirements and the effectiveness of what we do.

Mr. Devlin: Is it true, as I have been told by the defence trade unions, that the Trident refit programme contract has not been let to Devonport because of technical difficulties, and that therefore the contract may yet go to Rosyth? If that is so, will my hon. Friend reconsider the future of the Navy base at Eaglescliffe in my constituency?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend has always been

extremely skilful in linking Eaglescliffe to Wales, as he has today. No decisions have yet been taken; I understand that they will be shortly.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: On the matter of RAF Valley, the Minister was good enough to see a deputation from my constituency on 23 May. Is he aware that today we met the Secretary of State for Wales, who made clear his support for our bid to ensure the maximum number of local job opportunities under the market testing exercise currently taking place at the camp? Does the Minister accept that we have an extremely strong case to maximise those job opportunities and that the Ministry should be flexible about the introduction of the scheme?

Mr. Soames: I am very grateful to the hon. Gentleman for bringing such a formidable delegation to see me. We listened carefully to what was said and I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales was fully aware of that conversation. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have extended the consultation period, at his request and that of the Welsh Office, to examine carefully the points that he raised. I give him a public assurance that all the assurances he sought and all the points he made will be carefully considered as we reach a conclusion on an extremely important matter.

European Policy

11. **Mr. Jim Cunningham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement as to the progress that has been made on a common European security and defence policy. [25104]

Mr. Rifkind: The United Kingdom has sent to its allies our proposals for improving western European defence co-operation within the NATO framework.

Mr. Cunningham: Does the Secretary of State agree with the Labour party that British troops involved in military operations overseas should be answerable to the British Government and to Parliament? Does he further agree with the Labour party that we should not opt for a European army?

Mr. Rifkind: That is certainly the policy of Her Majesty's Government and it may be the view of the hon. Gentleman, but I have yet to hear it expressed so eloquently by those on the Opposition Front Bench.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the future defence of Britain and the continent of Europe should depend on NATO, not the Commission in Brussels, and that in future we should enhance the European pillar of NATO, using its well-tried and tested command and control set up? Does he further agree that, when we need bilateral arrangements with our neighbours in Europe, they should be secured through the NATO command and control set-up, whenever that is possible?

Mr. Rifkind: I unreservedly agree with my hon. Friend. There is a good case for closer western European co-operation to strengthen NATO's overall capability. I believe that NATO and WEU can work closely together, as they have over the past 40 years.

Dr. Reid: Since the Secretary of State seeks an eloquent response from us on a European army, I shall give him it as eloquently as possible: no. We obviously wish to reinforce European defence co-operation, but does he agree with our view that the immediate issue is not how to pass more power to European defence institutions but how to render their existing power more effective and open? Does he agree, therefore, that there is no question of Britain giving up our national veto on national security matters, and that the way ahead lies in further intergovernmental co-operation and not in giving further power to European defence institutions?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman would sound a more convincing supporter of our national veto on defence and security matters if his party were not so anxious to get rid of the veto on so many other issues.

America (Discussions)

12. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he next expects to meet his American counterpart to discuss armed forces issues. [25105]

Mr. Rifkind: I expect to meet the United States Secretary of Defence, Dr. Perry, during the meeting of the defence planning committee on 8 June.

Sir Michael Neubert: Will my right hon. and learned Friend take advantage of his next meeting to draw on the Defense Secretary's advice and experience of President Clinton's ill-starred proposals for homosexuals in the American armed services? Would not such a proposal in the United Kingdom threaten the renowned effectiveness of Her Majesty's armed forces as a fighting service and put any future Labour Government on a direct collision course with the chiefs of staff?

Mr. Rifkind: The American experience should convince those who need persuading that it is crucial to consult the chiefs of staff and the armed forces before conclusions are reached on such matters and not afterwards.

Mr. William Ross: Whenever the Secretary of State meets his American counterpart, will he put to him the necessity of his armed forces being equipped with the best weaponry that is available? Will he point out to him that, should the Americans buy the Shorts missile for that helicopter, it would render an attack helicopter that is already formidable much more lethal?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman is right to stress the high quality of all the equipment that Shorts produces. The United Kingdom's armed forces benefit from that equipment, and I am sure that other countries would as well.

Mr. Harry Greenway: When my right hon. and learned Friend next has conversations with the United States about its views on Bosnia, will he ensure that it is prepared to back its words with deeds by its own forces and not leave its wishes to others to implement?

Mr. Rifkind: I understand what my hon. Friend is saying. It is worth emphasising that the United States offers substantial air power. Its position on ground forces is well known. We rightly acknowledge the major contribution that it has made to both naval and air forces within the former Yugoslavia.

Land Mines

13. **Mr. Touhig:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's estimate of the number

of anti-personnel land mines currently deployed throughout the world. [25106]

Mr. Freeman: We understand that the United Nations estimates there to be more than 110 million land mines emplaced.

Mr. Touhig: With so many anti-personnel land mines scattered indiscriminately around the globe, does the Minister agree that now is the time to seek an international agreement to ban all such mines? Are not anti-personnel mines causing serious problems for our troops in their humanitarian mission in Bosnia?

Mr. Freeman: I think that the whole House would agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is a humanitarian problem—mines having been scattered indiscriminately in many countries throughout the world—and a major military problem. To seek an international ban on manufacture, ownership and deployment would not work; it would be ineffective. The Government's view is that the Army needs, justifiably, some anti-personnel land mines. We must, therefore, protect the Army's ability to procure such land mines and to deploy them within the strict terms of the weaponry convention. I agree that we need to improve the convention and to seek increased observance of its present provisions. That will be more effective than seeking an outright ban.

Mr. Lester: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government set an excellent example in spending a great deal of money lifting other people's mines laid in civil wars and in moving forward the humanitarian effort?

Mr. Freeman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Government have spent about £14.5 million on mine-clearance work. I congratulate the Mines Advisory Group on its hard work. The indiscriminate sowing of mines, especially in the Falkland Islands, will remain a problem for many years to come.

Atomic Weapons Study

14. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department will commission a military study of the use of atomic weapons over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945; and if he will make a statement. [25107]

Mr. Soames: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Barnes: Anniversaries are important because they give us the opportunity to do things that we should have done previously. Should we not have an investigation into what happened 50 years ago at Hiroshima and Nagasaki? President Eisenhower said that it was not necessary to hit the Japanese with that awful thing. The lesson for today might be that we should not be dependent on nuclear weapons and that we should be reducing our stockpile in an era of non-proliferation treaties, and even removing that stockpile altogether rather than increasing it.

Mr. Soames: The hon. Gentleman needs to remember that the war ended—*[Interruption.]* I fancy that the right hon. Member for Kingston-upon-Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will never again be so popular. The war ended with the Allies victorious. The hon. Gentleman should remember that. We retain our nuclear weapons to deter—to preserve the peace, not to fight wars—in which role they have been a stupendous and triumphant success.

Mr. Gill: On the question of awesome weapons of mass destruction, has my hon. Friend read press reports that, next year, Russia will deploy the SS24 Topol missile? Does that not cause him to revise his Department's view that Russia no longer represents a direct threat to the peace of western Europe?

Mr. Soames: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to draw the House's attention to the fact that the Russians retain a formidable military capacity, on which we keep an extremely beady and careful eye. He is also quite correct to say that we should at all times remember the lessons of the past and that we need to keep our forces in readiness for whatever threat they may face. I can assure my hon. Friend that the advice from the chiefs of staff is that we are configured to do that right now.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hoyle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 June. [25121]

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Hoyle: Will the Prime Minister take time off from his engagements to reflect on his fatuous remark that householders suffering from negative equity were responsible for their own plight? Does he not recall that, as Chief Secretary to the Treasury, he was the main architect of the inflationary Budget of 1988, which led to the dramatic rise in house prices? Instead of blaming those unfortunate householders, will he not for once accept that he is responsible for their calamity?

The Prime Minister: I know the hon. Gentleman well enough to suspect that he knows that he has quoted me out of context. The remarks that he described as fatuous were actually made by the shadow Chancellor about what I said and were not in fact what I said. I am flattered that the hon. Gentleman should think that I was the main architect of the 1988 Budget, but I rather fancy that the then Chancellor might dispute it.

Mr. Pickles: Has my right hon. Friend had a chance to look at the decision of Essex county council to end bussing pupils to grammar schools? Is he aware of the great anger in my constituency about that decision? Is he further aware that the savings have now proved to be negligible? Does he agree that, unless the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats reverse their decision, education will go backwards in Essex and only the rich and privileged will be able to afford grammar schools?

The Prime Minister: I have seen the press reports. I have not called for a detailed report of what has happened, but superficially, on the basis of the reports that I have seen, what has happened seems to be in fairly sharp conflict with the rhetoric of the Leader of the Labour party and the Leader of the Liberal Democrats, both of whom have given me notice that they will be elsewhere this afternoon. I understand that the hon. Member for Sheffield Brightside (Mr. Blunkett) has called on the

Government to do something. He wants us to do something to protect the electors from the malice of Labour and Liberal councils.

Mr. Prescott: Bearing in mind the fact that it was the Prime Minister who set up the Scott inquiry and appointed Sir Richard as chairman, can he now assure the House that Sir Richard Scott continues to enjoy his full confidence?

The Prime Minister: I asked Sir Richard to carry out that report and I have confidence that he will do so thoroughly. When he has finished his report, I will consider it. When I have considered it, I will comment on it.

Mr. Prescott: We welcome the Prime Minister's support for Sir Richard Scott. May I remind the Prime Minister that it was his Chancellor, on the BBC's "Question Time" last year, who said that he would resign if the inquiry found that he had acted improperly? Can the Prime Minister assure us that, if the inquiry finds that any Minister had knowingly misled the House, he or she must resign?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman may wish to draw conclusions from a partial report not yet— [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes or no?"] I will reply to the question in my own way.

The right hon. Gentleman may wish to draw his conclusions on the basis of a partial report; I will draw my conclusions when the report has been responded to by those mentioned in it, when a final report has been produced and when I have had time to study and consider that final report.

Mr. Prescott *rose—*

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman should contain himself a moment.

At that point I will make my judgment on the basis of the facts, not now, as the right hon. Gentleman does, on the basis of his prejudices.

Mr. Prescott: Will the Prime Minister make it clear that if the inquiry, in its final conclusions, finds that any Ministers have misled the House, they must be asked to resign?

The Prime Minister: I have made it perfectly clear that I am making no judgments on what may be in the report until the report is complete. What we have seen thus far is a malicious leak of a part of the report— *[Interruption.]* I repeat, what we have seen thus far is a malicious leak of a part of the report. My right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, to whom the right hon. Gentleman is clearly referring, has made it perfectly clear that he rejects the observations contained in the draft extract and has said that he is confident that he will persuade the inquiry that those views are wrong and inaccurate. We will await the final report.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the disgraceful leak of the Scott inquiry proceedings and their subsequent exploitation by the BBC and the Opposition is a denial of natural justice?

Mr. Skinner: The Government leaked it.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) has clearly finally flipped if he believes what he is shouting out at the moment. [HON. MEMBERS: "Who leaked it?"] I wish I knew who had maliciously leaked this selective aspect of the report. But I do know who is seeking to take advantage of that leaked report in studio after studio. I wonder what people might make of someone who takes a partial extract of an incomplete report before it is responded to and appears in every studio in the land to smear someone. I know what I make of him. I make of him the shadow Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Beith: If the Prime Minister has formed no conclusion about the judgments that will be contained in the final version of the Scott report, how was it possible for reports to emanate from Downing street yesterday of full support for the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in his denial of the conclusions that have been leaked? Will the Prime Minister ever tell us the truth about all this or will the Government behave true to form and never take responsibility for anything that goes wrong?

The Prime Minister: There was a time, a long time ago, when the Liberal party actually believed in waiting for the facts before it smeared, but that is not so these days. Like Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen, at the first available opportunity it takes the worst possible construction, without facts, without right of reply, without consideration and makes its judgments. I will not do that. I will make my judgment on the basis of the facts when the people criticised have had the opportunity to reply and when they have replied. One day, the right hon. Gentleman might learn that that is the right way for anyone in the House to behave.

Mr. Butterfill: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there can be no public interest defence in what the BBC has done? To behave in the way that it has in respect of a report that will be published in full in any event can only be a subversion of the public interest.

The Prime Minister: I said a few moments ago how much I deplore the malicious leak and that it appears to have been broadcast without any opportunity being given for the people named in it to respond. I believe that the people of this country will make up their own minds about that behaviour.

Q2. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 June. [25122]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Prentice: Further to the Prime Minister's wholly inadequate reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle), may I remind him of what he said last week? He spoke of the crazy situation of spiralling house prices and silly borrowing. Will he never take responsibility for anything—or is he content to allow mortgage misery to continue for millions of people, shuffling responsibility on to anyone but himself?

The Prime Minister: What the hon. Member for Warrington, North (Mr. Hoyle) said—which the hon. Gentleman clearly did not understand—was that I had

personally blamed the people who had taken mortgages for their difficulties. That is not what I said, as anyone who reads what I said—

Mr. Prentice *indicated dissent.*

The Prime Minister: Here again, the hon. Gentleman does not want to know what was said; he just wants to take the political opportunity to smear again and again and again. That is the single constant factor in the attitude of Opposition Front and Back Benchers: never mind the facts—let us live with the myths.

Mr. Anthony Coombs: I warmly welcome the Government's robust approach to the Messina conference last weekend, but will my right hon. Friend remind Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission, that, far from wanting to give up the opt-out or our national veto, the vast majority of the British people want the European Commission's interference in the nooks and crannies of British life to be reduced? Is it not typical that the only people who do not appreciate that are members of the European Commission itself and members of the Opposition parties?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, we certainly intend to retain the veto in regard to a range of important matters. The Labour party is wrong to seek to undermine the veto position: that will not be understood by people in this country, and it is wholly wrong.

If Labour Members had taken the opportunity to read the OECD report or any of the other reports, they would also know that their policies on the social chapter can do nothing but harm to this country, while giving great comfort to our competitors.

I confirm to my hon. Friend that we shall sustain the veto, continue our policy of seeking genuine subsidiarity and certainly try to ensure that the essential parts of British life are protected from external interference.

Q3. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 June. [25123]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Sheerman: Looking back on four and a half years in No. 10, what does the Prime Minister most regret? Does he most regret the loss of 800,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector, the repossession of the houses of a third of a million people or his total failure to appoint a team of Cabinet colleagues who are honest, trustworthy or competent?

The Prime Minister: I will tell the hon. Gentleman precisely what I am most pleased about that has been achieved in the past few years. I am most pleased that we now have the best opportunity for sustained recovery with low inflation and job creation that the country has seen for 30 years. The hon. Gentleman can name no western European country whose position has improved so much over the past four years; he can name no western European country whose unemployment has fallen so rapidly; and he can name no western European country with prospects such as ours. That is what I look back on having achieved in the past four and a half years.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will my right hon. Friend accept that I was in no way misled by our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he wrote to me about arms to Iraq on 4 May 1989? I was astonished, therefore, that the matter was raised at all in the Scott report. When I asked my right hon. Friend what the score was, however, he replied again that the guidelines were applied on a case-by-case basis, in the light of the circumstances of the day.

Does my right hon. Friend accept that these are guidelines, not tablets of stone, and that it would be the height of insanity if they were not operated in the light of the circumstances of the day? Does he further accept that I know of no more honourable man in politics than our right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food?

The Prime Minister: I strongly agree with what my hon. Friend has had to say in the last couple of moments. My right hon. Friend has made those points to the Scott inquiry and I have no doubt that in the response to the preliminary report he will re-emphasise those points.

Q4. **Mr. Martlew:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 6 June. [25124]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Martlew: The Prime Minister will recall that in the Budget statement in November 1993 the Chancellor gave the go-ahead for the upgrading of the west coast main line. He said that it was the most important rail link in the country.

Does the Prime Minister realise that to date there have been no contracts let and no work done on that line, the line is crumbling, the service is deteriorating and thousands of passengers are being inconvenienced by the delay? Will he give his Transport Secretary instructions to stop asset-stripping our national railways, and get on with upgrading the west coast main line?

The Prime Minister: If the facts are as stated by the hon. Gentleman, I think he has made the most classic case for privatisation I have ever heard.

Film Industry

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Stephen Dorrell): With permission, Madam Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the British film industry.

As the House knows, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) has a longer history of expertise and knowledge about films than I have. It is therefore right that I should begin by acknowledging my debt to the National Heritage Select Committee, which he chairs. I very much welcome its thorough and perceptive report on the industry. I have, as I told the Committee I would, taken the opportunity of my response to its report to set out a full analysis of the state of the industry and of the issues confronting it.

The right hon. Member for Gorton has apologised for not being in the House this afternoon. He is attending Lord Wilson's funeral.

My response to the Select Committee represents the first statement of Government policy for the film industry since 1984. I hope that this response will be the beginning of a new and constructive dialogue between the Government and the film industry. I have set up a new team within my Department specifically to sponsor the wider audio-visual industry and to ensure that its needs are better understood by Government. I have done that because I believe that this sector, including the film industry as part of it, represents a major opportunity for Britain.

That opportunity takes two forms. Partly, it is an opportunity to create employment in Britain by attracting foreign film makers to come here to make films, and partly it is an opportunity to encourage British film makers to exploit a growing market and to take advantage of our considerable natural strengths in this field.

Britain is already attractive to foreign film makers. Last year saw American companies spend over £176 million in Britain, compared with under £70 million two years earlier, but more does need to be done.

The Select Committee rightly focused on the work of the British Film Commission, which is funded by my Department and which helps attract film makers to Britain. The Select Committee emphasised the need for a local film commission for London. I agree with the Committee and can today announce that we shall be offering direct pump-priming support for the establishment of a London Film Commission.

The Committee also highlighted the need to deal efficiently with work permit requirements for film production personnel working in the UK. I agree with the importance that the Committee attaches to this issue and my Department will work with the Department of Employment and with the British Film Commission to ensure that the needs of the industry are recognised.

The Committee's report includes a number of recommendations relating to taxation. The Government recognise the importance attached to tax issues by many in the industry. As the House knows, however, tax policy is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who announces his proposals for change each year in the Budget. I cannot therefore respond directly today to those aspects of the Committee's report which deal with tax policy. I can say, however, that as he prepares his Budget statement this year, my right hon. and learned Friend will carefully consider the Committee's recommendations together with the logic that underpins them. But the Government are not simply concerned to attract foreign film-makers to Britain—we are also concerned to reinforce the strength of our own film industry.

Despite reports to the contrary, the sector is doing well. Out of 24 feature films selected for the Cannes film competition this year, four were British, and three of them—"The Madness of King George", "Carrington", and "Land and Freedom" won awards. [HON. MEMBERS: "How many have you seen?"] Two of them. It is a success story. The question is how to build on that success.

The Government believe that the development of the independent production sector, as a result of the foundation of Channel 4 in 1980, and the introduction of the statutory independent production quota in 1990, are the key to the answer. This sector has produced a large number of small production companies. We now need to encourage them to grow into larger enterprises that are able to be more independent of television commissions and to absorb the greater risks involved in film-making for the cinema.

The television sector itself has a part to play in that process. Both Channel 4 and, more recently, the BBC and Granada have seen the benefits of financing films which have a cinema and video life before they are broadcast.

Producers cannot look only to television for finance, however. If independent production for the cinema is to grow, it must be able to attract support from capital markets. I am therefore establishing a new advisory committee to examine the financing of independent film production and to recommend the steps necessary to allow the sector to raise the capital it needs to finance its growth.

In the meantime, I can announce that Government action has made support available to the sector from a new source—the national lottery.

Since 1986 the Government have provided support to British Screen Finance, which has invested £37 million in 102 feature films. British Screen invests only in films which it believes have commercial potential and it shares in any profits which the films generate. It invests alongside the private sector. The Government's support to British Screen will continue.

In addition to this support, the Arts Council of England has announced that it intends to use lottery money to invest in British films in the way pioneered by British Screen. Depending on the quality of applications the Arts Council estimates that it could invest more than £70 million in British film making over the next five years.

Furthermore the Arts Council is making available further substantial sums, again depending on the quality of applications, to improve the accessibility of new British films to British audiences. This money will be available to increase the number of prints available and to enhance the promotion of new British films.

Over five years, therefore, the national lottery is offering the prospect of more than £80 million of new support to British film. This is but one more example of the opportunities opened by the national lottery which will—I believe—be widely welcomed.

A further issue stressed by the Select Committee was the need to maintain support for training in film-making skills. I agree with the Committee on this subject and

will—as it suggests—discuss its specific proposals with industry interests. I am also pleased to be able to tell the House that the national film and television school, which receives support from my Department, has today announced that it has reached agreement with the BBC on a formula that will provide for the reopening of the Ealing studios. Ealing has a particular place in the history of British film making and I am sure the House will join me in welcoming the news.

This year is the centenary of the cinema. My final announcements therefore concern the Government's plans to mark this anniversary. First, they are providing £180,000 to support Cinema 100, an organisation created by the industry to mark the centenary. Secondly, the Government plan to examine ideas for a west end showcase dedicated to the exhibition of new British films. We believe that the proposal could enhance critical and audience interest in new British work; we look to involve other interested parties, and I am delighted to welcome the participation of the BBC.

If today's trends continue, that showcase will have plenty to exhibit. I have made no secret of the fact that my own attitude to the film industry has changed since I learned more about it. In 10 years, the British cinema audience has more than doubled—up from 58 million admissions in 1984 to 124 million last year. More films were made in Britain in 1994 than in any year since the early 1970s. The growth and increasing sophistication of the cinema audience; the earlier growth of video; and the imminent explosion in the television market as a result of the arrival of digital broadcasting all combine to create an important opportunity for British film. The Government are determined to ensure that that opportunity is not lost.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I join the Secretary of State in paying tribute to the work of the Select Committee on the future of the film industry. I apologise on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) who, as the Secretary of State said, is attending the funeral of Lord Wilson of Rievaulx.

I welcome this first statement from the Government on the film industry in 11 years. However, its content is deeply disappointing. Of course some of the points in the Government's report and in the statement are welcome. The money from the lottery will be useful. The west end showcase will, I am sure, be a good idea. The statement of at least support for a London Film Commission is welcome, and the announcement of the purchase of Ealing studios by the National film and television school is undoubtedly welcome. I am sure that a new advisory committee in the Department will do no harm, but none of this amounts to much. As Rick Blane would have said, it does not amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world.

Specifically, why is there not a fuller analysis of the Select Committee's proposals on self-financing fiscal incentives to promote production? What notice has the Minister taken of the Irish experience with section 35, which is now reaping rich rewards for the Irish Exchequer as well as for the Irish film industry? What notice has he taken of the detailed economic modelling work that was recently carried out by the British Screen Advisory Council? Of course the Secretary of State must take those decisions together with his right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but where on earth is the evidence that the Government are thinking seriously about these possibilities?

The report makes much of the growth in American investment here in recent years, but why is there no acknowledgement of the massive trade deficit in film that persists between us and the United States? Why is there no recognition whatever in the statement or in the accompanying report of the one crucial and overriding factor that has driven increased American investment in the past couple of years—the favourable pound-dollar exchange rate? Why does the Minister reject out of hand any reform of the Channel 4 funding formula, which is not mentioned in his statement and is addressed fleetingly and rejected in the report? At the very least there could be some reform of the scheduled review date. In due course that could lead to £15 million of extra investment a year in British film production.

The Secretary of State spoke about pump-priming funds for a London Film Commission. What amount does he have in mind? That is nowhere specified. It has asked for £400,000. How much does he propose to devote to it? He had many warm words on the excellent work of the British Film Commission, but he has cut its budget in recent years. Is it true that he has no intention at all of making good those cuts? While we all welcome the news of the purchase of Ealing studios by the national film and television school, are not the funds for that coming from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts and not directly from the Government? Why is there no mention in the statement or in the report of the importance of developing the excellent film industries in Scotland and Wales?

Is it not true that the report adds up to £16 million a year extra from the lottery; £2 million for Ealing from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts; nothing for Channel 4; a token amount for a London Film Commission; £180,000 for Cinema 100; and a new committee? That is about it.

In "The Third Man"—in case the Secretary of State is not aware of the film, I point out to him that the Select Committee helpfully placed a photograph of it on the front of its report—Harry Lime famously said that 500 years of democracy in Switzerland had produced nothing but the cuckoo clock. Sixteen years of Tory Government, a series of Downing street seminars and a visit by the Secretary of State to Cannes to find out what a film actually is have produced nothing but a disappointing set of assertions and virtually no real action to support the British film industry.

Mr. Dorrell: To describe that reaction as churlish is an understatement. One of the questions that we shall repeatedly ask the Opposition in the coming months is how much they would spend on different aspects of their ambitions. We begin to learn a little about how they approach the expenditure of moneys under their control when we hear the hon. Gentleman dismiss more than £80 million of new support to the film industry as not a hill of beans. Most in the film industry will recognise that support for production from lottery resources as well as support for extra prints and support for extra promotion, so that we do not simply produce films but get them in front of audiences, will be seen as an important step forward in film policy in Britain.

The hon. Gentleman asked me why I did not deal with tax. As I have made clear in my statement, the answer is that I am not Chancellor of the Exchequer. The hon. Gentleman also asked me why I did not cover the impact of film in foreign trade. He must have missed pages 16 and 17 of the document, which are devoted to virtually nothing else.

[Mr. Dorrell]

The hon. Gentleman asked me what notice I had taken of the experience of British Screen. I should have thought that I made it pretty clear that I found the experience of British Screen as a mechanism for developing the film industry rather attractive, as I said in the statement that that was the process and the idea that would be followed up by the Arts Council in the distribution of its resources.

The hon. Gentleman asks me how much money we shall make available to the London Film Commission. The answer is that we shall provide pump-priming money; we are negotiating with the commission over precisely how much money will be needed. The hon. Gentleman accused me of having cut the British Film Commission's budget; that is not true. The British Film Commission's budget this year is the same as it was last year.

The hon. Gentleman regards it as a source of criticism—I do not accept this—that the purchase, refinancing and development of Ealing will be financed in part by the Foundation for Sport and the Arts. I should have thought that that would be something to celebrate and welcome.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked me why I did not elaborate on Channel 4. The reason was that I had no announcement to make on that subject, as the decision was made six months ago.

Mr. Tristan Garel-Jones (Watford): Is my right hon. Friend aware that a substantial Malaysian group, Third Millennium Studios, has planning applications before Watford borough council and Three Rivers district council to construct in the borough of Watford what would be the largest film studio in western Europe? Can my right hon. Friend, if those planning applications go through—as I hope and expect they will—assure me of his full support for this plan which will not only turn Watford into the Hollywood of western Europe, but will give satisfaction to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), who is himself a Watford boy?

Mr. Dorrell: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. He draws attention to an important point, which is that the interest being shown by Third Millennium Studios in the development of the Leavesden site is yet further evidence of the attractions of Britain as a film-making destination to people coming from overseas. We should seek to develop that attraction, and my statement sets out some steps that we shall take to do precisely that.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): I welcome the disarming admission of ignorance by the Secretary of State and I hope that it presages wisdom on the subject of films, although I think that he will have to go a good deal further to satisfy the industry. What attention, if any, is his Department giving to the saga of Brent Walker at Elstree? Does he hope that that saga will come to a happy conclusion?

I understand why the Secretary of State is not willing to say anything about taxation. However, does he recognise that taxation changes could generate considerable additional activity in this country which, in the medium term, could be beneficial to the Revenue?

Finally, there is a slightly metropolitan flavour to the statement, which concentrates rather heavily on London. Has the Secretary of State nothing to say about the promotion of a national network of British screen activity, for there is much in Scotland, the provinces, Wales and Northern Ireland that could be exploited for the making of British films?

Mr. Dorrell: The hon. Gentleman asked me several questions, the first of which was whether I was interested in what will happen at Elstree, and whether I hoped for a good and helpful outcome. Of course, the answer is yes, although the negotiations are taking place between private sector parties and the Department of National Heritage is not a direct participant.

I certainly do not seek the metropolitan bias that the hon. Gentleman detected in my statement. It is necessary for us to continue to develop London as an important part of the film-making jigsaw. That is why we must develop a London Film Commission, and why I am attracted to the idea of a west end showcase. But I am also interested in ensuring that the growth of the British film industry will mean British films being shown in the rest of the country as well. That is why I welcome the interest shown by the Arts Council in using lottery money to increase the number of prints and to increase the promotion budgets for British films, precisely so that they can be shown in cinemas outside the metropolitan area.

As for tax, my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor has made it clear that he will consider the proposals of the Select Committee and the representations made by the industry when he prepares his Budget for November. I am sure that the representatives of the industry, and probably the members of the Select Committee, too, will follow up that interest.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I am sorry that the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) was so churlish in his response, and I hope that my right hon. Friend's statement will be seen for what it really is—not as tokenism towards the luvvies or as advocating subsidies for leisure, but as a recognition of the need to back an industry that could be worth millions of pounds, dollars, yen and ecu. The fundamental requirement is still for a fiscal level playing field with our competitors in Ireland and France. Will my right hon. Friend use all his endeavours to ensure that that is achieved?

Mr. Dorrell: I have already made it clear that that is a matter for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. No doubt there will be plenty of opportunities for all those interested to make their views known to my right hon. and learned Friend ahead of the Budget. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) is right to emphasise the opportunity that exists in the film sector to develop commercial enterprises that will employ people in Britain and draw attention to British achievements both here and overseas.

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): As the Secretary of State has rightly acknowledged the close relationship between the film and the television industries, is it not sensible to reflect upon the profound damage done to the television industry by the Government's deregulation policies which have meant, among other things, the loss of 8,000 jobs in independent television companies and thousands more at the BBC, with the consequent loss of the training opportunities that are vital to investment in the future of the film and television industries?

Is not the clear lesson, which even the Government may be able to learn in these revisionist days, that successful industries happen not by accident but only when the Government are willing to take a lead? They must acknowledge the importance to our economy of the film and television industries, both of which have suffered damage because of their policies.

Mr. Dorrell: I simply do not agree with the hon. Gentleman's analysis, especially the proposition that successful industries arise only as a result of Government leadership. Of course I acknowledge that the Government have a role in ensuring that the environment is as favourable as we can make it to the growth of successful enterprises. That is why I think that our approach to broadcasting policy over the past 10 years has been right. In particular I believe that the development of the independent producer sector is the key to the opportunities that now exist for those small businesses to develop into medium-sized and larger businesses able to produce not merely programmes for television but films for cinematic release too.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that Ealing, the nation and the world will be truly delighted by the injection of life which he has announced today for Ealing film studios, from which many brilliant comedies have emanated for many years? Will he say to those kind hearts who inspired the decision that they will be rewarded with coronets from successful films in the future?

Mr. Dorrell: I am not sure if I can respond in kind to my hon. Friend's references, but I share his enthusiasm for the opportunity which has been unlocked today by the agreement between the BBC and the national film and television school. I look forward to renewed success and prosperity for Ealing as part of a network of studios which—subject to planning—may include a studio in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Watford (Mr. Garel-Jones) as well.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Does it notsum up the Secretary of State's level of knowledge that when he was asked a reasonable question about the metropolitan bias of the statement, he started to waffle on about films being shown outside London? Does he not appreciate that the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland (Mr. Maclennan) was talking about films being made outside London? Can the Secretary of State point to a single proposal in the document which will assist in that process? The film "Braveheart" was largely filmed in Ireland as a result of a proactive Irish Government policy which is not matched in this country. Is there a single proposal in the document which would prevent such a situation from occurring again?

Mr. Dorrell: It is instructive that the hon. Gentleman is interested only in making films outside London. That is not to say that that is unimportant, but it is equally important that films, once made, should be shown to audiences. There is not much point in producing films which do not find their way into cinemas. It was proper to answer the hon. Member for Caithness and Sutherland's question about a metropolitan bias as I did by placing emphasis on getting British films into a broader range of cinemas so that the hon. Gentleman's constituents, as well as constituents of hon Members who represent London constituencies, can see British films.

The development of film making outside London is part of the central purpose of the network of film commissions to be headed by the British Film Commission. When the hon. Gentleman has had a chance to study the document, he will find that another of the Select Committee's recommendations which I have accepted is that we should work with local authorities to complete a network of film commissions around the country.

Mr. Toby Jessel (Twickenham): As a member of the Select Committee, may I warmly welcome the Secretary of State's positive response to our report? As Britain has a tremendous array of talent, skill and flair among our actors, actresses, producers, directors, photographers, artists and technicians of all sorts, and as there is a growing world market for English-language films, is not it entirely right for us to continue in this way by building on our strengths?

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend, and I am grateful for his support. The key point is the one with which he concluded: that there is a growing demand for films. Cinema audiences have more than doubled in Britain in the past 10 years. Digital broadcasting and the development of a broader range of broadcasting outlets provides further opportunities for British film makers to make more films for those outlets, as well as conventional theatrical ones.

Mrs. Helen Liddell (Monklands, East): Like my hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), I was greatly depressed by the Secretary of State's statement this afternoon because again he perceives film as peripheral to economic development in this country. I was impressed that the Secretary of State said that he has learned more about the film industry, but perhaps we should compare this country with Ireland where there is a Cabinet Minister with a passion for the arts and for the film industry.

What guarantee will the Secretary of State give that the economic modelling work which has been done will be taken into account when the new committee is set up, as often committees are set up as a recipe for inaction? The impact of that work can be seen in some areas; for example, the economic development which came to areas in Scotland as a result of the production of "Rob Roy". Is not the Secretary of State's view of the matter too concerned with over-centralisation?

Mr. Dorrell: I guarantee that the committee will be useful because I shall not give it a general brief to make any recommendations that may occur to it about how to develop the film industry. Instead, I shall ask it a specific question: what steps can be taken to assist the flow of private sector capital into the development of film-making businesses in Britain? If one asks a committee tightly focused questions, one is more likely to get something of value out of it, and that is what we shall do.

Mr. Terry Dicks (Hayes and Harlington): May I ask my right hon. Friend to believe that Forrest Gump would understand how nonsensical his statement has been, and that it is another justification for closing down his Department and saving taxpayers £1 billion? What angers me most about his statement is that money from the lottery fund will go to the luvvies in the film industry when medical charities, such as organisations trying to

[Mr. Terry Dicks]

find out about leukaemia in children and the Spinal Injuries Association, could do with that money. The damned statement is a disgrace.

Mr. Dorrell: I will not say that I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I disagree with him, because, as he will know, the lottery legislation provides that 20 per cent. of the money raised by the lottery is available for the charitable sector. My hon. Friend will also know that the National Lottery Charities Board has made it clear that, while its first round of awards will be focused on those with problems of poverty, it intends to broaden the range of beneficiary charities in later rounds. That section of the lottery is most likely to benefit medical charities.

The money that we are discussing today has been awarded by Parliament to development of the arts. I join the majority of hon. Members who have asked me questions following my statement in welcoming the fact that the Arts Council is using some of the money available to it from the lottery to promote the development of a viable commercial film industry in Britain.

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the past 20 years, more than 30 per cent. of Oscars have been awarded to UK talent? Is not that an example of what can be achieved without massive indiscriminate subsidies to the film industry? Does he agree that intelligent targeting of funds on specific aspects of the film industry would be the most productive way to proceed? Is not the deafening silence from Opposition spokesmen about how much money, if any, the Opposition would devote to the film industry remarkable?

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Obviously, it is important to focus resources on a defined objective, and the Arts Council's plans will pass that test. My hon. Friend is also right to say that we face today an Opposition who dismiss £80 million as simply no more than a hill of beans. I look forward to hearing how much money we must spend before they conclude that we have got over a hill of beans and started talking about real money. Do they consider £100 million, £200 million or £500 million real money? What is "real money" to the Opposition?

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): May I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, not because it gives everything that the film industry requires—it certainly does not—but because it is a positive step in the right direction? Does he agree that setting up a film commission in London was one of the major priorities of Sydney Samuelson and the British Film Commission and that therefore some of the Opposition's remarks are irrelevant to the needs of the industry? Does he accept that the representations which the House and his Department can make to the Chancellor of the Exchequer between now and the November Budget are critical because, if we are to compete with other countries like the Republic of Ireland, we must provide our industry with fiscal incentives, not subsidies, which the industry desperately needs to compete internationally?

Mr. Dorrell: I understand my hon. Friend's argument, which I have heard him make on previous occasions in both public and private. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will hear it between now and November.

Mr. Eric Pickles (Brentwood and Ongar): My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) talked about the need for a level fiscal playing field. When my right hon. Friend pursues that point, will he bear in mind the fact that the real money is made not in film production but in distribution? We have a limited number of distributors. It does not matter how good a film is; it is the distributors who decide the total take and where it is to go in London or outside. If my right hon. Friend is looking for a way to help the industry, he should tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the most effective way is to find incentives for distributors to put money into film production in this country. That will be far more impressive than any subsidies that may be on offer.

Mr. Dorrell: My hon. Friend makes an important point because he has underlined the important role played by distributors and exhibitors in getting films on screen. It is precisely because I recognise the strength of my hon. Friend's point that I welcome the plans of the Arts Council to focus on giving support for extra prints and extra promotion. I shall certainly look at other ways in which we might encourage the distribution network to be even more actively involved in film distribution. It is, of course, already involved, but the greater its active involvement, the more the distribution and exhibition system is committed to the exhibition of films.

NEW MEMBER

The following Member took and subscribed the Oath:

Roseanna Cunningham, for Perth and Kinross.

Points of Order

4.6 pm

Mr. Llew Smith (Blaenau Gwent): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will be aware that two years ago tomorrow, in response to a written question, the Prime Minister altered the Government's position on answering questions about arms to Iraq. He said then that he would not answer any questions or make any comments on the Scott inquiry until its conclusions were published. Yesterday, in support of his Minister, he commented on the conclusions of the Scott inquiry. Would you inquire, Madam Speaker, whether the decision to block questions on that inquiry has now been lifted so that hon. Members like myself can pose questions on that important issue?

Madam Speaker: I have no doubt that the Table Office will be studying carefully the exchanges that took place to see what effect, if any, they should have on the tabling of future questions. I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that matter.

Mr. Don Touhig (Islwyn): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In view of the report published this morning, which reveals that smaller class sizes have been shown to improve children's education and the fact that a report from the National Commission on Education is due to be published next week calling for smaller class sizes, can you tell us whether you have received a request from the Secretary of State for Education to come to the House to make a statement on that matter?

Madam Speaker: Perhaps I should inform the hon. Gentleman that when a statement is to be made in the House that information appears on the annunciator by 1 o'clock, so the hon. Gentleman and the rest of us are already informed about that when the House sits.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. From time to time, when there is a leak from a document, the Government initiate some form of inquiry. I listened carefully to what the Prime Minister said today, as no doubt you did, Madam Speaker, and I wonder what steps can be taken if those of us who assume that the Government leaked their own document want to pursue the matter to a conclusion in the House?

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been in the House long enough to know how to use the Order Paper to table parliamentary questions and questions to the Prime Minister, as well as early-day motions should he wish to pursue any such matter.

Corporal Punishment (Re-introduction)

4.8 pm

Mr. Warren Hawksley (Halesowen and Stourbridge): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to re-introduce corporal punishment for crimes of violence by youngsters.

I am grateful for the opportunity to ask leave of the House to introduce the Bill. I think we all agree that law and order is an important issue. We also agree that our constituents are very interested in and concerned about it. Twice previously, in 1982 and 1987, when I was the hon. Member for The Wrekin, I moved amendments to Criminal Justice Bills to try to bring back corporal punishment, which I believe would be a deterrent. I hope that today it will be third time lucky.

Last year, I tabled an amendment, on Report, to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Bill, but you, Madam Speaker, chose the debate on capital punishment rather than corporal punishment. The House has not been given an opportunity to debate corporal punishment in the present Parliament.

Unlike in my two previous attempts to bring back corporal punishment, I do not intend to discuss the detail of the method—whether one uses a cane or a birch—or the age of people on which the punishment might be used. In the Isle of Man, the legislation used to relate to people aged 10 to 18, and I accept that as adequate for the purpose of the Bill, although I know that some of my hon. Friends ask, "Why 18? Why not have it for older people?" I have no objection to their opinions on that subject.

I wish to argue the case for the reintroduction of corporal punishment as a principle. I am disappointed that the payroll vote will not be able to support the motion. It is sad that we do not necessarily discover all the opinions of the House on a ten-minute Bill.

My arguments are fairly simple. I and my electorate believe that there is too much crime, and especially too many crimes of violence by youngsters. I emphasise that I propose that an extra power be given to the judiciary to sentence young offenders; it would not be a substitute for the powers that they already have.

The most recent public opinion poll that I read suggested that the public genuinely supported the motion; about 70 per cent. of the public wanted corporal punishment to be brought back. We should listen to what our electorate are saying.

I believe that the public are right, and that we should listen to their anxiety about the increase in crime and their feeling and belief that corporal punishment would be a deterrent.

In the year that corporal punishment was abolished, there were 5,183 cases of violence against the person in this country. When I first, in the Criminal Justice Bill 1982, moved an amendment to bring back corporal punishment, there were 100,200 cases. Yesterday I checked the latest figures, which had just been announced—for last year—and discovered that that 100,000 had increased to 219,000. That increase shows the need for action.

I shall mention two cases regarding which Conservative Members would probably mainly agree that corporal punishment would be a deterrent. There was a case in Leicester last week. A lad swore at a 76-year-old lady in

[Mr. Warren Hawksley]

the street. She reprimanded him and said that that was not the sort of language that she wanted to hear. What did he do? He fired a gun at her face between the eyes. She is still suffering from the pellets that injured her.

What was the result of the court appearance? Twelve hours at an attendance centre. How much better it would be if someone like that were given six or 12 strokes of the cane. I believe that that would be indeed be a deterrent. If there are Members who are worried that that will be degrading to the poor 13-year-old, I suggest that they think about the lady who suffered the attack.

The second example was also reported last week, in the *Birmingham Evening Mail*, a paper that covers the Birmingham area. Two yobbos aged, according to the press, about 12—I regret that, as yet, they have not been caught—were prepared to set about a lady of 41, who was less than 5 ft tall, and to break her nose and two of her teeth to steal a hamburger worth £1.50. That is the type of case in which a deterrent dose of corporal punishment would be used.

I know that some people will oppose the Bill on the grounds that the European Court of Human Rights is not happy about corporal punishment. However, in the Isle of Man case, the British judge ruled in our favour and the whole court ruled in our favour on two out of the three complaints. It agreed that corporal punishment was not inhumane treatment or a method of torture and that it was only degrading. I believe that the court has made some odd decisions in the past and I would certainly not be concerned if we were no longer a signatory to the European convention on human rights. I would be prepared to take that step in order to see corporal punishment reintroduced in this country.

I shall give two examples which I believe show the benefits of corporal punishment as a deterrent. Hon. Members may remember that last year an American youngster received corporal punishment in Asia. Do hon. Members remember the pictures of him taken at the airport when he was returning home? He appeared rather contrite; he was not at all happy. That is very different from the young thugs who leave our courts laughing at our judicial system and at their victims. I suggest that that young American learned his lesson.

I heard about the second example when I visited the Isle of Man shortly after corporal punishment had been suspended on that island. I talked to the chief constable on the Isle of Man who told me that many fans travelled from Manchester and Liverpool to watch football matches on the island. When the fans disembarked from the ships in Douglas they would invariably approach a policeman and ask, "Is it true that you still have corporal punishment on the statute book?" When the policeman confirmed that that was the case, the fans would say, "Don't worry, guv, we won't cause any trouble".

Corporal punishment had a deterrent effect and there were hardly any problems on the Isle of Man, even when large crowds gathered to watch football matches.

I believe that the reintroduction of corporal punishment would act as a deterrent. I believe that the frightening increase in the number of crimes of violence warrants such serious action and I hope that today I will be given leave to introduce a Bill to reintroduce corporal punishment.

4.16 pm

Mr. David Hanson (Delyn): I had not intended to speak against the Bill, but none of my colleagues proposes to do so and I believe that the right-wing nonsense that we have heard from the hon. Member for Halesowen and Stourbridge (Mr. Hawksley) deserves a reply.

The hon. Gentleman has taken a totally simplistic approach to the problem of crime, based on the barbaric theory that would-be offenders would be deterred by the threat of caning or some other form of corporal punishment. It ill behoves any Conservative Member to come to the Chamber, after 16 years in government, to complain about the increase in crime and introduce a simplistic solution such as the one that we are discussing today.

The European Court of Human Rights opposes corporal punishment and it has taken a strong stand against the Isle of Man in that regard. This country would be a laughing stock if we gave the hon. Gentleman leave to introduce a Bill to reintroduce corporal punishment. The hon. Gentleman should examine the causes of crime and the issues of poverty and lawlessness in this country. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We will have a little discipline now—hopefully without the aid of corporal punishment.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I note that you did not need to resort to corporal punishment to bring the House to order. After 16 years of Conservative government, I hoped that the hon. Gentleman would bring forward some positive solutions to the problem of crime. We must look at ways of supporting young people in our community and we should not inflict upon them the indignity of corporal punishment, which would degrade both those to whom it is administered and those who must administer it. I oppose the Bill and I hope that my hon. Friends will join me in doing so.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 58, Noes 153.

Division No. 157] **[4.18 pm**

AYES

Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)	Gale, Roger
Bendall, Vivian	Gardiner, Sir George
Booth, Hartley	Gill, Christopher
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)	Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes	Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Brazier, Julian	Hannam, Sir John
Butterfill, John	Hargreaves, Andrew
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey	Hawkins, Nick
Colvin, Michael	Hawksley, Warren
Congdon, David	Jenkin, Bernard
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)	Jessel, Toby
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)	Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Devlin, Tim	Leigh, Edward
Dicks, Terry	Marlow, Tony
Dover, Den	Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Duncan, Alan	Mills, Iain
Duncan-Smith, Iain	Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Dunn, Bob	Neubert, Sir Michael
Elletson, Harold	Nicholls, Patrick
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)	Pawsey, James
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)	Riddick, Graham
Fry, Sir Peter	Robathan, Andrew

Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shersby, Michael
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Thurnham, Peter
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Elizabeth Peacock and
Mr. John Carlisle.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Ashton, Joe
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Brown, N (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell-Savours, D N
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Corston, Jean
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dafis, Cynog
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge H'l)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Fatchett, Derek
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foulkes, George
Galbraith, Sam
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A
Gordon, Mildred
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hutton, John
Ilsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
McAvoy, Thomas
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Martin, Michael J (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll & Bute)
Miller, Andrew
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Purchase, Ken
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mike Hall and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly negatived.

Orders of the Day

Crown Agents Bill (Lords)

Order for Second Reading read.

4.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

In August 1993, my noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development, Baroness Chalker, announced the Government's decision to introduce proposals that would allow the Crown Agents to be transferred to a newly created, independent foundation. The Bill before us gives effect to that decision. It might be helpful to remind the House a little about the Crown Agents. Who is it? What is its history?

The Crown Agents began its work in 1833, when, as Crown servants acting under prerogative, it was appointed to procure goods and services for colonial administrations. Its status was redefined at the turn of the century, when the position of Crown Agents' staff was formalised as analogous to that of civil servants. A new headquarters was opened, and the volume and complexity of work undertaken increased rapidly.

The next milestone came in 1954, when its full name was changed from "Crown Agents for the Colonies", to "Crown Agents for Oversea Governments and Administrations", by which it is still known today, although I suspect that everyone in truth knows it as Crown Agents. That change reflected and assisted its transition from British colonial servants to the present international business, uniquely responsive to the needs of a wide range of overseas clients. It performed that task well for more than a century.

For almost all its 162 years, the Crown Agents has effectively operated in the private sector.

In 1954, Sir George Seel, the Crown Agent, gave a broadcast explaining the change of name for the Crown Agents. I think that what he said was of some interest. He said:

"We trace our ancestry as Crown Agents to the private merchants who, in the eighteenth century, handled the London or Bristol business of the several West Indian Colonies."

These private agencies were consolidated by the Treasury in 1833 into one establishment, under two "Joint Agents General for Crown Colonies", who then acted for 13 Colonies; henceforth under Treasury supervision, but still as a private business.

During the 19th century, various adjustments were made, as colonies multiplied and the business expanded, and in 1863 the name Crown Agents for the Colonies was introduced. In 1909, after a parliamentary investigation, the organisation took its present form under the general supervision of the Secretary of State for the Colonies.

"We are still,"

said Sir George Seel, in 1954,

"a private business in the sense that we are not paid out of taxes. We live on a modest commission on orders, adjusted from time to time to avoid piling up profits, or of course running into a loss. Our salaries conform to those of the Civil Service, but we depend for continued existence on satisfying our principals, the oversea authorities (now numbering 120) from whom we take our instructions. We are in short a Crown Office carrying on financial and commercial business on a large scale. Last year, we bought and shipped some £60,000,000 of goods, nearly all British. We hold over £800,000,000 of other people's cash and securities.

We are well known to British firms who export anything from railway engines to pedigree chickens, or from a dredger to a queen bee. We are known to investors in Colonial Stocks, and to thousands who have served overseas, and when on leave or retirement drew their pensions or salaries from our offices overlooking the Thames at 4 Millbank, London.

We act as consulting engineers. We float loans, or acquire house property. We can where authorised act as Universal Aunts for any public authority abroad which has business in this country.

Why change our name? The answer is simple. Twenty years ago 'Crown Agents for the Colonies' fitted well enough, but now our clients are by no means all Colonies, or even all British, or even all Governments. Foreign territories like Iraq, Jordan and Libya, once under British administration and guidance but now independent, still find it pays to use our services. So does Ceylon, an independent Commonwealth country. We act for international bodies, and for British Government departments under the Colombo Plan. We are constantly acquiring new clients among local authorities and other public bodies abroad.

For all these clients our name, nearly a century old, signifies quality and service; but many now find it misleading. We have therefore felt bound, although with some reluctance, to change it. In practice, we have always been called just 'Crown Agents', and we had hoped to make that our official title. But there is already a Crown Agent in Scotland, and it would be even more confusing, as well as discourteous, if we tried to poach on his preserves. So, after trying many alternatives, we become 'The Crown Agents for Oversea Governments and Administrations'.

Our friends will no doubt go on calling us Crown Agents for short, and we hope this will continue to stand for efficient service. We've been asked 'What's in a Name?' The answer, for us, is the maximum of business goodwill between Britain and many oversea countries."

That was Sir George Seel in 1954. As was clear, Crown Agents was a UK success story, effectively while in the public sector, running as a private business.

Alas, in the 1970s, things got difficult. Crown Agents unwisely expanded its own account business into areas in which it had no specialist expertise.

When the property market failed in the mid-seventies, Crown Agents was left with substantial losses, which Government were obliged to underwrite. That resulted in a Bill in 1979 which provided a tight framework of regulation and Government control—a necessary piece of legislation at the time, supported as a whole by Parliament.

On Second Reading in February 1979, it was clear that the Bill had been introduced against the background of a series of financial disasters, inquiries and investigations, and that the legislation was deliberately tight in order to try to ensure that such mishaps could not occur again.

For the first time in its history, Crown Agents was given statutory authority as a public corporation, responsible to the Minister for Overseas Development and the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The Secretary of State appoints the chairman and board, and has certain powers of direction over their work. The Act rightly took care to safeguard the traditional confidential nature of Crown Agents' relationship with its overseas principals.

But it is worth noting in the context of today's Bill that if Crown Agents, as a consequence of this legislation, moves into the private sector in the next year or so, it will have spent only about 15 years of its 162 years as a public body.

It is also worth noting that Crown Agents operates at no cost to the taxpayer. Since incorporation in 1979, Crown Agents has not received any subsidies from the Government—quite the contrary. Since 1979, Crown Agents has made payments of more than £20 million in capital and interest to the Government. It has been so successful that today it is one of the world's largest international public sector purchasing organisations.

It provides procurement, management and technical services to around 150 clients, serving 130 countries. It employs about 600 permanent staff, plus 250 overseas and contract staff. Its clients include other countries which give substantial bilateral aid, such as Japan and the Netherlands; and multilateral development agencies, particularly the World bank, the European Union and the United Nations. It is a matter of some pride to all of us that a country such as Japan has such confidence in the Crown Agents that it contracts out its overseas development work to the Crown Agents.

In the former Yugoslavia and in Rwanda, where Crown Agents has worked for the ODA and for the United Nations agencies, its procurement and logistic services have proved invaluable, delivering emergency supplies to those who desperately need them. There is no doubt that, with its help, we have saved many lives.

The heart of Crown Agents' business is, and will remain, the provision of procurement services for all its clients—whether public or private sector—here and around the world. It also provides training and advisory services in procurement. As one of a number of such projects in the former Soviet Union, Crown Agents provided the Russian Government with technical advice, funded by our know-how fund, for the management of a $350 million World bank import rehabilitation loan.

At its own training centre in Sussex and overseas, Crown Agents provides courses in a wide variety of disciplines that are highly relevant to economic reform and human development. The Crown Agents group also includes an asset management arm regulated by IMRO—the Investment Management Regulatory Organisation—and a financial services company which has applied for supervision, following passage of the Bill, by the Bank of England.

Its stamp bureau provides philatelic services for nearly a quarter of the world's postal administrations, and its wholly owned subsidiary Resource is helping the standards organisations of more than 30 newly industrialised countries to establish standards for product testing and inspection.

The Crown Agents ethos is rooted in a long and proud tradition, but it is completely relevant to today's competitive business environment and the needs of a growing army of customers. One of the most important of those is the Japanese Government. My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development is becoming used to the congratulations of diplomats and officials who have come across the work of Crown Agents. Most recently, the head of the Japanese Economic Co-operation Bureau, Mr. Hirabayashi, made a point of telling Lady Chalker—at a high-level meeting of the OECD development assistance committee in Paris—how much he valued the work done by Crown Agents.

The Japanese Government's appreciation of Crown Agents' professionalism and reliability is no doubt the reason why an increasing volume of Japan's aid programme is routed through Crown Agents. I am sure that the House will be interested to hear about a few of its more recent projects.

In Ghana, Crown Agents is currently organising a major economics consultancy for Japan's OECF to assess the progress of privatisation. For that project, it formed an Anglo-Japanese team—a good example of the new models of partnership and consultation that Crown Agents, as a business at the cutting edge of its field, is developing.

Hon. Members may be surprised to learn that the total value to date of the purchasing programme in the 14 sub-Saharan African countries that Crown Agents manages for the Japanese is around $1 billion. That substantial sum—along with the trust of the Japanese Government which it signifies—places a fair value on the quality of the work that Crown Agents provides for many clients across the world. That is why—along with, I am sure, the whole House—I have every confidence in the future success of Crown Agents.

The House may be most familiar with the work of Crown Agents in emergency relief and humanitarian assistance. It has deservedly won a pre-eminent reputation in that regard. Often operating in very difficult environments, frequently in an unfamiliar legal context, Crown Agents has built up substantial reserves of good will and trust as a result of its courage, professionalism and dedication. Its contribution to the Mostar relief convoy in Bosnia was decisive, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has placed on record "enormous appreciation" of its

"courage, professionalism and spirit . . . solidarity and dedication under extreme pressure and danger".

But Crown Agents' work rarely ends when the immediate crisis is over. It is also used to planning and building for the future. It has already begun purchasing and supplying equipment, plant and vehicles for the reconstruction of damaged facilities in the war-torn city of Mostar, under the management of the European Union Administration.

Hon. Members will recall that Crown Agents is a truly international organisation, with clients across the globe. It has developed speedy, innovative and flexible responses to emergencies, which take full advantage of their world-wide network of personnel and offices.

That network played an important part in the United Nations' emergency response to the Rwandan refugee crisis. Crown Agents airlifted logisticians and equipment to Zaire; a complex operation to supply water to a refugee camp near Goma was solved only when Crown Agents airlifted from Croatia a water tanker convoy, complete with equipment and spares. The tankers were soon transporting 350,000 litres of water daily into the camp, providing the last vital link in the chain of relief and saving many lives in that beleaguered country.

Crown Agents' many friends in the House and across the world will be pleased to know that it intends to make the best possible use of the expertise that it has developed in so many tragic parts of the world. Indeed, the ODA is currently discussing with Crown Agents plans to provide a full-time emergency response unit on permanent standby to deliver humanitarian assistance anywhere in the world.

The range of Crown Agents' activities is impressive. Its business is constantly evolving. Sixteen years ago, when the 1979 Act was passed, Crown Agents provided

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

the bulk of its services with funding provided through the British aid programme—although it served many other public sector clients around the world. Today Crown Agents obtains more than 70 per cent. of its work from overseas, because that work has increased substantially. New markets continue to be identified, and the benefit of Crown Agents' professional expertise is felt in the more recent areas of development activity—for example, Vietnam, Palestine and the central Asian republics.

My right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade opened Crown Agents' latest buying office last year in South Africa, where Crown Agents is making an increasingly important contribution to the development of the economy. Quality assurance and inspection services have been expanded, and a joint venture company established to service the growing volume of interregional trade in that part of the world.

Perhaps the most exciting project is the Soweto skills initiative, which combines commercial shrewdness with a real contribution to development in the poorest part of South Africa. It aims to identify potential entrepeneurs from the township for attachment to UK companies and training in enterprise skills. The project is run jointly with other businesses, both British and South African; host companies have included top-flight names such as Rolls-Royce, GEC and Hill Samuel.

I consider that a fine example of the collaborative, skills-based approach that Crown Agents is now developing. By marketing the expertise that it has built up over its long and distinguished history, it enables poorer economies to develop the qualities and personnel they need to produce and maintain an acceptable and sustainable standard of living for their peoples.

More and more operations are carried out in strategic partnership with other aid institutions or providers of complementary services. Crown Agents is developing multi-disciplinary services, based on its own pioneering work, and supplies management information systems for use by clients. This year will see the installation of a new computerised purchasing system.

Crown Agents is modernising to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive international market. It is up to Government to ensure that outmoded legal and political structures do not hold back the development of a great British success story that extends throughout the globe. Everyone appears to agree that the 1979 Act no longer meets Crown Agents' needs.

Throughout its history, Crown Agents has adapted—sometimes with the assistance of Parliament—to the continually changing environment in which it must operate. Those changes have not damaged the professionalism and integrity on which its reputation depends; they have strengthened it, and we must not stand in its way. We believe that it is no longer necessary or appropriate for Crown Agents to remain in the public sector, with all the constraints on its work that that involves.

It is our intention to provide the Crown Agents with a legal and financial framework which will enable it to continue to make its distinctive contribution to development by meeting the changing needs of its clients while preserving the essential qualities of probity and impartiality for which it is renowned.

The Bill provides for the transfer of the Crown Agents' business from the present statutory corporation to a successor company, under the Companies Act 1985, wholly owned by the Crown and therefore still in the public sector. However, the Bill then gives the Secretary of State the power to dispose of the successor company to a new owner. It is at that point that Crown Agents will leave the public sector.

The Bill also contains provisions for the future of Crown Agents Holdings and Realisation Board. That was a separate legal entity set up in 1979 to manage and wind up the assets and liabilities of the unincorporated Crown Agents' own account business, to draw a line under its losses. CAHRB will stay in the public sector to discharge its remaining responsibilities. When the last few loose ends are tied up, the board will be wound up by the Secretary of State using his existing powers.

This is an enabling Bill. It cannot prescribe the final form that the business will have in the private sector; nor should it attempt to do so. We have, however, made our intentions clear, and I would like to put them firmly on the record.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I declare a constituency interest in the future of Crown Agents, because a number of my constituents work at its headquarters in Sutton.

On the financial aspects of the matter, is my hon. Friend fully aware that the organisation will necessarily have some restructuring costs? Is he further aware that it is healthy for Crown Agents that the pension fund should be in surplus? Can he give some indication whether that situation could continue, because it would help finance some of the restructuring costs?

Mr. Baldry: The pension fund and the staff of Crown Agents are very important. I hope that what I am going to say will reassure the House and my hon. Friend that we are seeking to achieve a structure which is strictly in the private sector—that is, one that does not have the Treasury straitjacket that comes from being in the public sector; a structure which recognises the contribution of the staff, protects the interests of existing staff and ensures that the Crown Agents moves into the private sector in a way that guarantees its continuing viability and that it will continue to be a great British success story.

I should like to deal with each of those issues separately. Our intention is that, in due course, the owner of Crown Agents will be a new, independent foundation with a clear developmental mission. I hope that that is clearly understood by the House.

There will be a two-stage process under the Bill. In the first stage, the Bill provides for the transfer of the Crown Agents from its present statutory corporation to a successor company, under the Companies Act 1985, wholly owned by the Crown and still in the public sector.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: If I may finish stage two, I will give way.

In stage two, the Bill gives the Secretary of State the power to dispose of the successor company. It will be our intention that that company will go to a new independent

foundation with a clear developmental mission. It is at that point that the Crown Agents will leave the public sector.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister was right to ask me to wait, because I wanted to ask about the foundation.

The foundation was announced by the Government in August 1993, nearly two years ago. Since then, my right hon. and hon. Friends in the other place and here have been pressing very strongly for the memorandum and articles of association to be published, so that we can see what sort of foundation it will be and what will be its purpose, structure and membership. The Government have constantly refused to do that. Can we have some guarantee that they will be published and made available to hon. Members during the consideration of the Bill in Committee, which will otherwise be a total farce?

Mr. Baldry: As the hon. Gentleman knows from comments in the other place, our intention is that the memorandum and articles of association should be published as soon as possible.

There are a number of issues which are still under consideration. Perhaps I can share one with the House. Certainly I want the Committee to be as well informed as possible, but I could not give an undertaking or guarantee that the articles will be ready for the Committee stage.

Let me take one issue that we will want to discuss in Committee. One of the ways forward would be for the foundation to be a charity. In that case, one of the issues that would have to be considered is whether the foundation would have charitable status.

Since the Barings debacle, there has been a different approach towards charitable status. Prior to the Barings debacle, it was perfectly proper and sensible for the trustees of a charity to repose all its funds in a particular institution because they may have considered that to be safe. Post-Barings, we can see that that might not be the most sensible way for trustees to fulfil their fiduciary duties. They may find it more sensible to spread their portfolio of investment.

If the foundation were to be a charity—and that matter is still under consideration—and was not able to invest all its portfolio in the operating company of the Crown Agents, there might be some continuing instability, which we would wish to avoid.

We share with the whole House the desire that the maximum amount of information about the foundation should be given and made available just as soon as it can be. Nothing in the Bill should cause a scintilla of concern to any hon. Member who has a genuine interest in development policies and in ensuring that the Crown Agents continues to do the excellent work that it has done in the past.

We have given repeated assurances about the nature of the proposed foundation. We have made it clear, and I repeat again, that we have no intention of selling Crown Agents by means of a trade sale, because that would not meet Crown Agents' needs, nor would it meet the concerns of its overseas clients.

The foundation will be a company limited by guarantee. No profits from the foundation will be distributed to its members. They will be reinvested instead in accordance with the developmental objectives set out in the constitution of that foundation. The memorandum and articles of association will be very tightly drawn, to preserve and build on the ethos which Crown Agents has developed over its long and distinguished history.

The permanent members of the foundation will bring together business ability with wide experience of aid and development. They will be drawn from charities, financial and trading companies, professional and trade organisations and other aid organisations and enduring institutions. Present members of the Crown Agents board may bring their unrivalled experience of the business to the initial membership, providing valuable continuity during the period of transition.

Again, I make it clear that the Government have no intention of having any involvement in determining who are the members. Obviously, we will wish to be satisfied that the founder members possess competence and integrity. The hon. Member for Eccles looks critical. Perhaps I should explain in a little more detail.

We do not start with a clean sheet of paper. We have the existing membership of Crown Agents, together with a number of organisations—the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, for instance—and charities that have a close interest in Crown Agents. One imagines some of those organisations coming together as founding members of the new foundation.

Human nature being what it is, I imagine that at some point Crown Agents and those who take a close interest in it will come together and tell the Government, "We wish to be the founding permanent members of the foundation." The Government will not determine who those members should be; we feel that Crown Agents and others can well work that out for themselves. We shall simply be concerned to know that they possess competence and integrity, and that collectively they will meet the developmental needs of Crown Agents.

We are still considering the best structure for the foundation. As I explained to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), a number of issues remain to be considered. We shall want to ensure that the new structure enables the foundation to fulfil its social and developmental objectives, while enabling Crown Agents' operating company to trade commercially.

As I have said, charitable status for the foundation is one of the options. It has its attractions, including oversight of the trustees by the Charity Commissioner. It also has difficulties, arising in part from the restrictions imposed by charity law on single investments. Prospective members of the foundation will have their views on this, and no final decision has yet been made.

We want to be assured that the future structure will be fully satisfactory before transfer of the business takes place. We will make sure that the fundamental objectives of the foundation cannot be changed without our agreement for a sufficient period to ensure that the new structure starts life on a proper footing. As to how long that period might be, I am certain that we can explore that in some detail in Committee. It is certainly our intention that there can be no change to the fundamental objectives of the foundation for a substantial period, so that it can start life on a proper footing and establish itself as a new entity in the private sector.

The foundation will be the sole shareholder in the operating company, which will be built on fully commercial lines. There are plenty of analogies for such

[Mr. Baldry]

a system. The Oxfam charity can operate with Oxfam Trading carrying out its business as a straightforward commercial operation whose profits are reinvested for charitable pursuits. The Wellcome Foundation carries out similar operations, too.

The operating company will be limited by shares and will service capital in the usual way; it is the operating company that will generate the surpluses which will enable the foundation to fulfil its developmental objectives.

The capital structure of the new company remains to be settled. The Bill contains provisions allowing us to make the necessary arrangements. We are keen to ensure that the new company does not begin its life overburdened with debt. We want to ensure that Crown Agents has a fair start, to guarantee the continuing viability of the business, not least because our aid programme is, and is expected to remain, a substantial customer of its excellent services. So we shall seek to ensure that the terms of transfer balance the need for a healthy rebirth of Crown Agents in the private sector with the interest of taxpayers in securing value for money for public assets.

To recap: there will be a two-tier structure, with the foundation being the sole owner of the operating company. The foundation will be a company limited by guarantee. My noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development confirmed that in another place on 24 April. The foundation's memorandum and articles of association will be tightly drawn up to reflect and to build on the social, ethical and developmental principles on which Crown Agents' business is based.

The operating company will operate Crown Agents' business along normal commercial lines, and will be limited by shares. The operating company will be able to pass its profits to the foundation. The foundation will not distribute dividends, but will use any profits from Crown Agents' business in pursuit of its overall objectives.

Members of the foundation, some of whom may serve on the board of the operating company, will not be appointed by Ministers. Existing members of Crown Agents will be among the founder members of the foundation. Other founder members may be drawn from a range of institutions, including finance and trading companies, professional and trade organisations, charities and other developmental aid bodies. Additional new members will be nominated and selected by existing members in accordance with the foundation's articles of association. The Secretary of State will have reserve powers, so that no change can be made to the fundamental purpose of the business, without his consent, certainly for a period of up to five years.

We are working hard with our advisers and with Crown Agents to resolve a number of complex legal issues, which will be made clear in the memorandum and articles of association. We shall make them available to Members of this House and place them in the Library.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister has spelt out the provisions for the foundation and the operating company in great detail. What he has omitted to say—I believe it is the most important element—is whether, after the five-year period, when the foundation becomes free-standing and is no longer subject to the control of the Secretary of State, anything will be written in to the rules to prevent the company selling off all its assets to a private company—Lonrho, Tate and Lyle or some other firm. Will there be safeguards in the memorandum and articles of association? They are essential; I hope that the Government will take that into account if they are not already doing so.

Mr. Baldry: I suspect that the House will ultimately have to come to a judgment on that and certain other issues in this Bill. I am sure that we will hear views expressed in this debate on whether the foundation should be described on the face of the Bill, for instance.

To answer the hon. Gentleman's question: the foundation, it should be remembered, will begin with a membership comprising existing Crown Agents and people with an interest in the present ethos and philosophy of the organisation, and in its continuing success. The people who will become founder members of the foundation will all therefore be committed to Crown Agents. They will not be rapacious speculators. I reiterate—they will all be people who want Crown Agents to succeed.

As with any other group, if someone drops out, under the articles of association of the foundation the remaining members will be able to appoint someone else to join. Thus, new members will all be organisations committed to the developmental and philosophical aims of Crown Agents. No organisation will be able to get involved unless it enters as a founder member or is later appointed under the memorandum and articles of association by those who are founder members.

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I am puzzled. The Minister said that the Government would not appoint people. In that case, what absolute guarantee does he have that they will be the sort of people that he describes?

Mr. Baldry: I thought that I had explained that. Crown Agents will seek to get around it a number of charitable and business organisations such as the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply, and perhaps the Association of British Chambers of Commerce—bodies which have a genuine interest in the work of the Crown Agents. The Government will have to look at those organisations in the round to see whether we are satisfied about their competence and integrity to take over the foundation when the Secretary of State moves to the second stage of transferring to the foundation the company that the Bill will set up.

It is inconceivable that organisations that are committed to the developmental and philosophical objectives of the Crown Agents will not form a strong foundation that is committed to the development work of the sort that Crown Agents currently carries out. When the foundation is in place and the Secretary of State has transferred to it the company that is set up by the Bill, those founding organisations will control the foundation.

The only way in which any other organisation can become a member of the foundation is by appointment by its existing members under the memorandum and articles of association. Therefore, there is no way in which an organisation could become associated with the Crown Agents unless it was committed to the current developmental and philosophical aims of the Crown Agents.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The Minister's speech is reminiscent of "Candide"—

everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds. However well intentioned and qualified, the people in foundations do not always hold the same views, and there are disputes. If there is a dispute in the foundation about how matters should proceed, how will it be resolved unless the Secretary of State retains some residual power?

Mr. Baldry: The foundation will be in the private sector. Let there be no doubt that, when the Secretary of State is satisfied about the competence and integrity of the membership of the foundation, he will transfer the company that is set up by the Bill into the foundation. At that stage, Crown Agents will move into the private sector. It will be a company limited by guarantee, and any disputes in the foundation will be resolved under company law using the process of the memorandum and articles of association. We could all put forward worst case scenarios.

Since 1979, Crown Agents has, in effect, operated in the private sector. That was brought about in 1979 for particular reasons. It has operated successfully throughout the world because it has always had a clear purpose, commitment and idea of its work. That will continue.

Mr. Forman: The debate is not overburdened with speakers. Presumably my hon. Friend wishes to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the head of the procurement division, as the briefing says, of the World bank, Mr. Scrinivasan, is perfectly happy with the idea of Crown Agents moving into the private sector at some appropriate stage. He sees that as being to the advantage of Crown Agents and its clients.

Mr. Baldry: My hon. Friend makes a good point, and I can reinforce it by telling the House that, as far as I am aware, none of Crown Agents' clients, suppliers or customers is concerned about what is proposed. They all recognise that the legislation will provide Crown Agents with an opportunity to move forward unrestricted by limitations that are placed upon it because it is strictly and formally still within the public sector.

We are working hard with advisers and the Crown Agents to resolve a number of legal issues. They will be made clear in the foundation's memorandum and articles of association, which will be made available to hon. Members and placed in the Library. Some people wish us to put the foundation in the Bill, but that would be unnecessary and would add nothing to what Ministers have said or will say before the Bill leaves the House.

The staff of Crown Agents are its greatest asset. They are distinguished by their courage; many staff members who have been operating in places such as the former Republic of Yugoslavia have shown courage, professionalism and competence in the broadest sense. Those qualities have been displayed in some of the most dangerous parts of the world, and 11 employees of Crown Agents received honours in the past year for delivering emergency aid to the long-suffering people of Bosnia and Rwanda. The Bill rightly protects their best interests.

Nothing in the Bill affects the application of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, commonly known as TUPE. The terms and conditions of staff and the continued recognition of trade unions that are recognised at the moment of transfer will be inherited by the new company. Pension funds are held in trust, and current assets are more than sufficient to meet present and future demands. Crown Agents has no plans to alter the present arrangements.

The security of trust-based schemes will be further protected by the provisions of the Pensions Bill, which is currently being considered by the House. There will be no change in the assets and liabilities of the funds when the business transfers.

During the transition, we shall take all necessary steps to ensure that clients appreciate that the quality and range of services that are offered by Crown Agents will remain unaltered. Indeed, they should be enhanced. Client confidentiality will continue to be respected, and the change in status from a public corporation to a foundation will make no difference to existing or new contractual obligations.

Nothing in the Bill should cause any concern to anyone working with or for Crown Agents or to any of its customers or suppliers. The Bill seeks merely to ensure that Crown Agents can move into the 21st century with a structure that is fit for the next century. The Bill will allow it to secure its future by freeing it from cumbersome and unnecessary constraints in the public sector while strengthening its ability to develop new commercial opportunities here and overseas.

Crown Agents is a great British success story, and we wish to ensure that its future business has a stable and enduring structure and that the success story continues. I commend the Bill to the House, and trust that hon. Members will give it a Second Reading.

5.18 pm

Miss Joan Lestor (Eccles): I and, I am sure, the whole House thank the Minister for the detailed analysis and background he gave about the Crown Agents and about the arguments leading up to the Bill. As we discuss the Bill, it will emerge that the Minister and Conservative Members are more trusting than we are. We shall see how it goes.

It is important to place it on record that debates on the Crown Agents here and in the other place have been typified, from all quarters, by genuine expressions of good will towards the organisation, as the Minister rightly said this afternoon. I welcome the opportunity to place on record our admiration for the work and the first-class reputation of the Crown Agents and its loyal and committed staff.

As we have heard, the Crown Agents is one of the world's largest international, public sector purchasing organisations. It provides the highest quality of service, advising on the cheapest and most efficient ways in which to supply projects. It continues to play an important part in the Overseas Development Administration's rather shrinking bilateral aid budget.

In recent years, those services have been supplemented by new roles, on behalf of Britain and other donors, such as ensuring the safe delivery of emergency aid, as we have heard, to the stricken areas of Rwanda and Bosnia, and providing assistance in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. All that is to be welcomed.

In its annual report, the managing director of Crown Agents accurately reports:

"We have remained constant to our core purpose of providing financial, professional and procurement services for the economic development of our clients . . . We are entirely self-supporting . . . exposed to and tested by the rapidly changing market place and must deliver services which are contemporary, economic and effective."

[Miss Joan Lestor]

He describes the procurement business as "our engine room" and he points out that Crown Agents is "also becoming a catalyst" for change.

Without doubt, the name "Crown Agents" is synonymous with the highest standards of impartiality and probity. Crown Agents is justifiably anxious to maintain that good will and credibility which have been so carefully built up over the years—an anxiety shared by many of its clients. The tradition of service to Britain and to other countries is now under threat, not from within the organisation, but from the Government, and it is all so very unnecessary.

The Minister paints a picture of an organisation that is unable to respond to the commercial challenges presented by a changing world because it is in some way tied by its historic structure. I believe that it is important to have fixed points in a rapidly changing environment, especially if they provide not only stability but a guaranteed quality of service, as Crown Agents does. There is, however, a strong case for allowing the Crown Agents to take on additional functions and to operate in new markets. I shall address that point in greater detail a little later.

What I cannot accept—this is the only choice put to us—is that we have either to privatise the organisation or leave it exactly as it is; I cannot accept that there is no third way. Let us make no mistake. However it is put, we are talking about privatisation, even though some Ministers have been remarkably reluctant to use the P-word. In the light of recent bungled attempts in other sectors, the House will understand that reluctance. Both in the other place and here, Ministers have talked of transfer to an independent foundation or of "a suitably formed foundation", whatever that may mean. Neither we nor the Government know exactly what that means.

We have heard about the Government's intention that Crown Agents will move into the private sector. We have heard that a successor company, wholly owned by the Crown, will be established, and will therefore still be in the public sector. We have heard that

"the Bill gives the Secretary of State, with the consent of the Treasury, the power to dispose of the successor company to a new owner."

Baroness Chalker had to admit, however, that

"the terms of this future transfer are not specifically addressed in the Bill".—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 28 February 1995; Vol. 561, c. 1410.]

The Minister partly confirmed that in his speech.

As a result of this legislation, this public sector organisation will be redefined as being in the private sector. Its assets will be transferred to a company limited by guarantee. Is that not privatisation? There are many reasons why the Government have chosen this bizarre route to privatisation. I am given to understand that some Treasury Ministers favoured straight privatisation—sale to the highest bidder—which would have yielded a positive financial consideration and provided the clean break from Government which is so popular in Whitehall circles. There were, however, substantial snags in that option.

For some time, strong rumours have been circulating that some of the major clients of Crown Agents, especially the Japanese Government who are its second largest client, were sensitive about a possible future takeover. They have questioned whether the high standards of probity and impartiality associated with Crown Agents could be maintained if the organisation became part of an international conglomerate. The possibility of the Japanese and others taking their custom elsewhere—that is a big part of the work of Crown Agents—could have jeopardised the sale. Concern has also been expressed about the grossly high salaries and share options that we have come to associate so clearly with British privatisation programmes.

It was as a direct result of those concerns that the Government decided to go for the unusual route of establishing a foundation which would have developmental objectives. It was not an easy decision for Ministers to take, although they now would have us believe that it is the only and obvious choice.

Once again, expensive City consultancies have been wheeled in to chew over the pros and cons. Coopers and Lybrand produced an extensive report in 1992 which has still not been made public. I understand, however, that Coopers and Lybrand recommended a straight trade sale. "They would, wouldn't they?" one might say. Since then, the Government have been dithering over the options—or considering them deeply, depending which phrase one wants to use.

I am sure that the President of the Board of Trade, for example, must have pointed out what a significant ally Crown Agents is in the effort to increase British exports. Crown Agents knows United Kingdom suppliers well and it is, in turn, accessible to them. Some 35 per cent. of aid procurement handled by the United Kingdom is sourced in the United Kingdom. The link with British industry is worth tens of millions of pounds a year, and let us hope that it can continue. Straight privatisation would have put that relationship in jeopardy.

The choice of a foundation is unusual. Comparisons have been drawn with other organisations: the Wellcome Foundation is a prominent example which bears closer scrutiny. Like Wellcome, the Crown Agents foundation would have twin objectives, trading and development, which would be kept entirely separate. However, Wellcome has been in the news recently because of a takeover battle, and there are interesting parallels with the proposals for Crown Agents, which we should pursue.

The Wellcome Foundation is a registered charity. A trust owned all the shares in the associated drug company until 1986, when a quarter were sold. A further third were put on the market five years later. Each sale required High Court approval, because the will that set up the trust left the trustees in ownership of the company, but without the power to dispose of that ownership. As a result, the trustees had to obtain a scheme from the charity commissioners to override the will. However, it was the clear intention of Sir Henry Wellcome when drafting his will that control of the company should remain with the trustees.

The recent Glaxo bid for Wellcome shares shows how important it is to have specific provision in the articles of association to safeguard the welfare of the company and its staff, to which the Minister has referred. We must ensure that a future Crown Agents foundation is not left vulnerable as the Wellcome Foundation, which has been held up as such a good example, has been.

At the heart of our concern about the Bill is the fact that so many details about the foundation have been left hanging in the air. Despite the Minister's assurances—I

am sure that they are given in good faith; but he has greater faith than I have—I am not satisfied, and I do not believe that anyone else is who is concerned about the organisation's future.

The Government still have not made up their mind about the board or the structure of the foundation. The Minister for Overseas Development has said that membership of the foundation will reflect the international character of Crown Agents' activities, and will include representatives from the corporate sector. We can do no more than speculate what that means. I presume that the Japanese national aid agency could reasonably expect an invitation to take up membership.

It is conceivable that Treasury Ministers have suggested that, whichever body assumes responsibility for overseeing the trading activities—presumably it will be the board of directors—it should be composed mainly of hard-nosed business men and women with no direct interest in, let alone commitment to, the developmental aspects of Crown Agents' work. Other Minister have expressed concern that the foundation's objectives may be changed by its members. Indeed, the Bill does not make it clear what safeguards there will be to ensure that membership of the foundation will not eventually pass into the hands of people with radically different ideas about how it should operate.

I understand that the Bill will give the Secretary of State limited reserve powers, possibly for five years, to rein in any attempt to change the fundamental purpose of the foundation. But, as my hon. Friend the Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) has already asked: what will happen after that? If we need a five-year guaranteed reserve power for the Secretary of State to stop any change in the fundamental purpose of the foundation, there must be the possibility that attempts will be made to change that fundamental purpose. Why else are the reserve powers there?

As I read the Bill, it says that, although we shall watch the situation carefully for five years, after that, open season will be declared.

Mr. Forman: Does not the hon. Lady understand that the Crown Agents' strengths lie precisely in the technical, procurement and related activities that support the developmental objective? She must know that. So what possible reason could there be for Crown Agents in the private sector, with greater commercial freedom, not to play to its strengths?

Miss Lestor: The hon. Gentleman is making the same point as I. In other words, it is all a matter of faith. There is no guarantee in the Bill that what he wants and expects is likely to happen. As I have already asked, why suggest the five years' reserve powers if everything is bound to be all right? If it were certain that nobody would go in a different direction because everyone is committed, we would not need the five years reserve powers.

Baroness Chalker said in another place that members would not be appointed by the Minister, and the Minister repeated that today. However, in Baroness Chalker's words, Crown Agents is

"in touch with a . . . range of institutions including finance and trading companies, professional and trade organisations, charities and other development aid bodies."

How can Ministers give a firm assurance that the proper balance between those different interests will be achieved if there is not control over the composition of the membership?

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I have listened with great interest to the hon. Lady's hostility to the whole idea of the private sector's having any role to play in the future of Crown Agents. Does she not accept that the purpose of the transfer is to enable Crown Agents to prosper, flourish and develop? She seems to suggest that it will be incapable of maintaining the integrity that it has shown so far. Will she set the record straight and say where she stands? Does she not trust Crown Agents?

Miss Lestor: The hon. Lady has slightly misunderstood my argument. Privatisation is not the same thing as encouraging the private sector in certain areas. *[Interruption.]* With respect, those two things are not the same. One can privatise an organisation so that it is completely private, or one can have an organisation with elements that make it a public organisation, although the private sector is encouraged to participate up to a certain point. The second alternative is not privatisation.

It is the Government, not the Opposition, who do not trust Crown Agents. I trust Crown Agents and believe that its contribution has been unusual and welcome, and that it still has a long way to develop further. But I do not want the purposes for which Crown Agents was set up to be undermined because the Government are opting out of any control or management of it.

The Government have not set the terms for the transfer of the powers and assets to the operating company. We are told that that can be left to discussions with future foundation members, whoever they may be, once the structure is established in whatever form. Apparently the members might decide to apply for charitable status at some time in the future.

Such a lack of information is not acceptable when we are being asked to allow a Bill of such importance through the House. It shows a disregard for Parliament and a clear intention to thwart the accountability that is achieved through the system of parliamentary debate.

We know that the new company will be limited by guarantee, but we are still waiting for sight of the memorandum and articles of association that their lordships were assured would

"reflect . . . and . . . build on, the social, ethical and developmental principles on which Crown Agents' business is based."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 28 February 1995; Vol. 561, c. 1410.]

I hope that that is true, but why could such detail not have been included on the face of the Bill? The Minister said that it would not add anything, but its absence suggests to me that something is being hidden. Including the detail would have gone a long way towards addressing the real concerns of people who value the Crown Agents and want it to continue to provide the highest quality of service.

The Bill will have little effect on the working of Crown Agents in the short and medium term. It already operates in a highly commercial way, and there is no suggestion that the developmental objectives will be jettisoned at this stage. However, after privatisation there will be two obvious changes.

First, any future borrowing by Crown Agents will not count against the public sector borrowing requirement. Secondly, Crown Agents will no longer be limited to

[Miss Lestor]

serving aid agencies and other public bodies in the developing world. That is another of my concerns. In effect, Crown Agents' services will become available to a much wider range of organisations, including health authorities and local government bodies in the United Kingdom—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"]

Conservative Members should not get too excited; nobody is saying that that should not happen—but I trust that the enthusiasm for new markets will not lead to too drastic a shift in market focus, and that the developmental aspects of Crown Agents' work will continue to be central to future corporate plans.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) asked earlier about the welfare of Crown Agents' existing staff, which I understand is giving rise to some concern in his constituency. We must have assurances that there are no plans to make any staff redundant, because we have seen that sort of thing before.

Similarly, it is not unreasonable to require cast-iron guarantees that the pension rights of current and past employees will be safeguarded. I was not sure whether the Minister dealt with that question; perhaps it will come up again later. Not too long ago, Crown Agents gave itself a pension fund contributions holiday in order to break even. The rights of its pensioners must be upheld.

In another place, Lord Judd tried, with the tenacity that those who know him would expect, but sadly without success, to persuade the Government, as we are trying now, to put some flesh on the skeleton Bill. I have great admiration for my noble Friend's political skills; I have known him a long time, and he is an expert at eliciting information from the most reluctant Minister. But even he had to admit that he was up against a brick wall and getting nowhere.

We cannot but conclude that Ministers themselves are still so much in the dark about the details of this unique privatisation that they are not only unwilling but unable to give the reasonable assurances for which we ask. I found it disturbing when the Minister said that he could not guarantee that the memorandum and articles of association would be available for the Committee stage.

Surely, in Committee, it is time to probe deeper, to ask more questions and to put more flesh on the bones. Yet the Minister said that he could not guarantee that the details would be available. We are being asked to pass a measure with little knowledge of how it will work.

In my efforts to understand the thinking behind the Bill, I compared it to another Bill now proceeding through Parliament—the Commonwealth Development Corporation (No.2) Bill.

Ministers have argued that Crown Agents' business has changed so much over the decades that it has become necessary to transform the legal and financial structures in response to changing needs. That is precisely the same argument as Baroness Chalker made yesterday in the other place during a debate on the Commonwealth Development Corporation, an organisation operating in the commercial sector but from within the state sector—like Crown Agents.

Like Crown Agents, the CDC is seeking greater commercial freedom to pursue new markets and undertake additional services. Like Crown Agents, the CDC plays an important role in developmental programmes. But unlike Crown Agents, the CDC is believed by Ministers to be able to develop in the way it has suggested, without resorting to privatisation.

In the same debate, Lord Trefgarne spelt it out clearly:

"it is safe to assume that CDC, following the enactment of the Bill with its amendments, will be pursuing the same objectives by substantially the same means but with important new powers to do better more effectively, at an earlier stage and in a more fundamental way."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 5 June 1995; Vol. 564, c. 1226.]

During the debate, Baroness Chalker completely rejected the suggestion that the CDC could be privatised at some future date. That is the same argument, but a completely different conclusion. If the Government believe that such freedom would work for CDC, why not for Crown Agents? Why have they gone totally for privatisation?

We oppose this privatisation. *[Interruption.]* Did the hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) wish to make a comment? No, he just wants to sit and moan. The Government have so far not succeeded in persuading us that the proposed foundation will successfully maintain at its core a development purpose.

The Foreign Secretary's view appears to be pessimistic, if a recent report in *The Daily Telegraph* was accurate. The right hon. Gentleman is quoted as saying:

"The Crown Agents are buyers and sellers for the Government overseas. But the aid budget is falling. They do a lot of foreign business and need to be free of public sector constraints. It is privatising in order to preserve."

If Crown Agents' trading fails to be sufficiently profitable, where will the funds come from to meet the developmental purpose of the foundation? That question has not been answered. The Bill is as flimsy as it is evasive, and it leaves far too much to private discretion and far too little to public scrutiny and accountability to this House. Privatisation is not the only course unless one has a slavish addiction to the dogma of privatisation, however unnecessary.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): The hon. Lady calls this measure a privatisation because it allows her to pigeonhole it. I find it fascinating that the hon. Lady says that she is opposed to this privatisation. In recent weeks, the Labour party has opposed what it calls the privatisation of the railways and the privatisation of the Atomic Energy Authority. The Leader of the Opposition said that the Labour party was not against privatisation, but time and time again it opposes each and every privatisation.

Miss Lestor: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has been reading some of our literature, even if he has got it wrong. What I am saying—the hon. Gentleman knows this—is that the Government say that they can do all that they want for the CDC in the Bill, and that it is not necessary to go for privatisation. But they are going for privatisation in this Bill with none of the safeguards or limits which are required to allow the Crown Agents to operate in the way it has said.

We have been asked to take the Bill on trust, and we will not even have the details of the memorandum before we go into Committee. We oppose the Bill, for the reasons which I have given. The Opposition seek to protect the benefits which the Crown Agents has brought to the developing world. It is absolutely right that the Crown Agents should have greater commercial freedom, but

privatisation will not generate the trading surpluses necessary if those developmental benefits are to continue to flow. Privatisation does not give that guarantee, and the Minister unfortunately has not put any flesh on the Bill to assure us that there will be accountability.

5.44 pm

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): I shall be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker. I believe that the Opposition are unnecessarily concerned about the measure. The first point to make—from both a constituency and a general point of view—is that the management of Crown Agents, led ably by Peter Berry and his colleagues, very much want the measure to go through. The employees also wish it to go through, as they believe it to be the right approach for the future of Crown Agents.

Mr. Foulkes: It is important to correct that completely misleading impression right at the start. The Crown Agents and its board were opposed to the proposals. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman reads the annual report of 1993, he will find that they were opposed to the proposals. It was only because the Government twisted their arms and threatened them with worse measures that they reluctantly went along with it.

Mr. Forman: The hon. Gentleman is out of date. I have had letters from Peter Berry, and I know that the organisation wishes the measure to proceed. Mr. Berry has confidence about the future of Crown Agents on its new basis.

The Bill is welcome because it provides a flexible and imaginative basis on which Crown Agents can go forward, prosper and broaden its markets in future. It strikes the appropriate balance between meeting the concerns of some of the principal clients—one thinks particularly of the Japanese, as mentioned by the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor)—that Crown Agents should not lose the honest broker status which it has built up over the years, and the wishes of management to obtain commercial freedom and flexibility that are beyond the scope of what is available in the Crown Agents Act 1979. Therefore, it gives a correct and appropriate balance for the next stage of development.

That balanced objective should be achieved with the proposed two-tier structure which my hon. Friend the Minister set out in his admirable speech. A controlling foundation with a wholly owned operating company acting along commercial lines beneath it is a sensible way forward, and it could give the flexibility and the advantages that are sought.

From a constituency point of view, my constituents will be glad to learn that there will be no redundancies among staff working at the headquarters in Sutton. I hope very much that the pension arrangements will be left undisturbed by the proposed change so that they can be of benefit to employees and to the company by helping to meet restructuring costs. I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister said that both points would be satisfactorily addressed by the Bill.

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Mr. Forman: I am grateful for that response to an important point.

This is a good Bill, which I support wholeheartedly. I have, however, two or three questions which I should like to raise now and to which my hon. Friend could perhaps reply at the end of debate, if he catches your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker. First, will the new legal framework give Crown Agents the ability to take on new clients such as health authorities and local authorities—in other words, to widen the scope of its client base? I hope very much that that will be the case, as it would be in the commercial interests of the organisation if it were.

Mr. Baldry: The answer to that question is yes. One of the reasons why we want Crown Agents to move to the private sector is that—under present Treasury rules—it cannot compete for public work with firms from the private sector while it remains in the public sector. That is one of the reasons why we want Crown Agents to have this freedom.

Mr. Forman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am doing very well.

Secondly, how extensive will the powers of the foundation board be in relation to the operating company? I have in mind the principle of trust law, in which a trust document is drawn up which gives fairly general—but none the less prescriptive—guidance to operating companies and subsidiary organisations acting within that trust document. To what extent is it envisaged that the foundation board will have real operating influence over the operating company?

Thirdly, will the Act, the trust document or the prospectus set out the Secretary of State's reserve powers? We have heard in the debate so far that the reserve powers will exist for five years or thereabouts. It would be interesting for the House to know in exactly what circumstances such powers might have to be used. That would go some way towards answering the fair concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Eccles.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for already answering at least one and a half of those three queries. I bring my speech to a close by underlining the key points: this is a good measure; it is worthy of support; and the Opposition are unnecessarily worried by the prospect of what they regard as privatisation but which I regard as a common-sense measure to widen the commercial opportunities of an excellent and reputable organisation.

5.50 pm

Mr. Derek Enright (Hemsworth): May I join other hon. Members in praising the Crown Agents? When I worked in Africa, I worked with the Crown Agents, and saw the practical work that it did for the United Nations development programme. As I was a delegate for the European Commission there, I saw the work which the Crown Agents did for the European Union. It was extraordinarily effective, because it had a reputation as an honest broker. It proved that it was an honest broker in how it carried out purchases or advised various organisations. That extremely important reputation should not be put to the test.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) said, from the moment that Price Waterhouse was brought on to the scene, suspicions were naturally aroused. I do not blame Price Waterhouse for that. It is a perfectly reputable firm with reputable jobs to do, but advising on development and how the Crown Agents fits

[Mr. Derek Enright]

into development is not one of its prime concerns, nor its area of greatest experience. I challenge the Minister to tell me of its previous experience in such an area, as it does not seem to have the necessary expertise.

This measure is privatisation, no matter how the Government now try to mince their words. They announced it as privatisation at the beginning and were rightly open about it. The purpose of privatisation is to put an organisation into the private sector; the purpose of the private sector is not to develop but to make money. No matter how gradually privatisation is carried out, the root of this privatisation is eventually to put profits into the hands of individuals or companies, not over the first five years but later.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): The hon. Gentleman seems to forget that new Labour has now moved on, supposedly. To listen to him speak, I would not believe that the Labour party had moved one at all. He spits out the word "profit" as if something were wrong with it and refuses to accept the fact that, with the new foundation in the Bill, the profit that is made will be reinvested. What is wrong with reinvesting profit for the benefit of the people whom the organisation serves?

Mr. Enright: There is absolutely nothing wrong with profit, nor did I suggest that there was. But there is a great deal wrong with profit that goes directly into the hands of greedy individuals rather than going into the wealth of the nation. It is extremely important to remember that. The Minister allayed none of our fears. He continually said that there was nothing in the Bill. There is nothing in the Bill and that is our complaint. He went on to say that that should not cause a scintilla of concern. That is an altogether splendid phrase, but what does it mean? What proof did he give us that the Bill has substance which we can trust? The Minister clearly trusts the general outline of the Bill, which is to ask for all the best in the best of all possible worlds. It is neatly and nicely expressed, but it does not spell out its intent in detail.

The only thing that is spelt out in detail is that the Government will play no part in appointing the foundation. If they do not appoint the foundation, who will they leave it to? How will the judgment be made? Will it be a succession from those who presently govern the Crown Agents? They are perfectly worthy people who do their jobs extremely well, but that gives no guarantee of the quality of their successors. The Government say that they will hold reserve powers for five years to vet any successors who are appointed. How strange to say that we shall need those powers for five years because the Crown Agents may go astray. Are the Government saying that they do not trust the present governors, but, in five years' time, when other people whom we know not are in charge, we can trust them?

The problem is that this whole exercise has been shrouded in secrecy. One has only to read Baroness Chalker's speech in another place to realise that she deliberately said that she could not reveal certain facts because that would infringe commercial confidentiality. She simply asked us to trust her. If there were one member of the Government whom I would trust, it would be Baroness Chalker. She is the most trustworthy of all the members of the Government with the exception of the Leader of the House. I do not trust the Treasury or the hard noses in the Cabinet who have not yet given up their fight. I congratulate Baroness Chalker on the fight that she has put up on a number of issues, although she is not in the Cabinet. She has pursued certain issues with great tenacity and I have nothing but admiration for her, but given the prevailing mood of the Cabinet, the Government will go for wholesale privatisation as soon as possible and nothing that has been said about the Bill so far, nor anything in the Bill, will convince me otherwise.

Mr. Foulkes: I share my hon. Friend's admiration for Baroness Chalker, but we keep hearing talk about Government reshuffles in July or September, and there is no guarantee that Baroness Chalker will be doing the same job next year. Let us suppose that the right hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), for example, were to take over the post of Minister for Overseas Development. We can imagine what he would have in mind for the Crown Agents. So I ask my hon. Friend not to be carried away by his enthusiasm for the delightful Baroness Chalker.

Mr. Enright: It is entirely possible that the Secretary of State for Wales might even take over with a place in the Cabinet, which would indeed give cause for concern.

The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) said in one of his more fluent interventions—he managed to get up and say a bit instead of mumbling from the Back Benches as is his wont—that we were using the term "privatisation" in the wrong way. By doing so, he said we were accusing him of wanting to privatise the Crown Agents and he suggested that nothing had ever been further from his mind and that he hates privatisation. If the hon. Gentleman is trying to suggest that the Bill is not designed to initiate privatisation, let me quote from the first press release from the ODA, which stated:

> "The Government has decided to privatise the Crown Agents by transferring them to a newly created independent foundation with a social purpose and developmental objectives."

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman has read that press release accurately. The hon. Member for Eccles made a bad point from the Opposition Front Bench when she suggested that Ministers have sought to disguise the Bill's intention. The purpose of the Bill is clear—it is about privatising the Crown Agents and moving it into the private sector. We have, however, made it clear, as way back as in the press release of 1993, that that process will be achieved through a

> "newly created independent foundation with a social purpose and development objectives."

The idea that Ministers are involved in some sinister, macabre plot does not fit with the facts.

Mr. Enright: The Minister is absolutely right—it is not a sinister, macabre plot, because there will be a five-year hold on full privatisation. That is spelt out in the Bill. The Minister said that the Government will ensure that the plans are tightly drawn. When I heard that, I scanned through the Bill once again. If it is tightly drawn, I shudder to think what a loosely drawn Bill would be like.

Mr. Peter Berry is a most able managing director of the Crown Agents. If one reads his successive reports, as I did in preparation for the debate, it is clear that he has been whipped along a particular path. When he was interviewed by the *Financial Times*, his clinching

argument for being whipped along the path that the Government had chosen was that the new way of doing things meant

"there will be no disincentive to be proactive."

What gobbledegook. That sounds like the old Thatcherite language which the Government are trying hard to ditch. If that is the one argument for opting for that particular form of privatisation, with the ultimate aim of total privatisation, the whole thing is an absolute shambles.

Lady Olga Maitland: Bearing in mind the total venom with which the hon. Gentleman talks about privatisation, can he give the House one assurance? In the event, heaven help us, of a Labour Government, would he press that Government to bring the Crown Agents back into the state sector, which would hamper its future prosperity?

Mr. Enright: When we take over government again, as the hon. Lady has virtually admitted that we will do very soon, we will start from a different place. As the Irishman said, "I wouldn't have started from here".

I will not start from where the hon. Lady would wish me to start. We will have to see what is happening at that time. I hope that the five-year estop, which has been imposed, will be most helpful in ensuring that we will be able to continue to run the Crown Agents properly.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that his refusal to answer that question and the refusal of other Opposition Members to answer any questions about privatisation and renationalisation is the very reason why the Labour party will not win the next general election?

Mr. Enright: As the Prime Minister said earlier this afternoon, I am not going to answer questions in the way that hon. Members want me to answer them; I am going to answer the question as I see it.

Let us consider the disincentives to proaction. The Minister will recall that the tighter rules, of which he now complains, were brought in in 1979 for a perfectly good reason. They were originally mooted by the Labour Government because in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Crown Agents, given the amount of freedom it then had, managed to invest in Australian property and to make rather a muck of it. One of the great things about that episode was that it proved the Crown Agents' absolute integrity in public service, because it was examined closely as a result of the huge mess it had made in Australia among other places. One department was found to have made a muck of things by making investments it did not really understand. There was, however, no dishonesty involved.

Such is the unique reputation of that public service which works closely with the private sector. The state and the private sector working together represents new Labour. That is precisely what the Crown Agents does so well now. To tip over that balance so that the Crown Agents is transferred completely into the private sector will tip the balance too far. That will unsettle an institution with a delicate balance.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman recalls the visit that he and I made to Tunisia—a client of the Crown Agents—last September? We saw the enormous contribution that privatised British Gas is making to the development of the Tunisian economy. Would he have made the same speech as he is making now against the privatisation of British Gas? Would British Gas have been able to make that contribution to the Tunisian economy if he had had his way then? Does he not accept that the Crown Agents should be able to enjoy the same freedom now enjoyed by that fine British company?

Mr. Enright: That fine British company has just given us an example of democracy at work at the meeting of its shareholders. The former Prime Minister used to shout that small shareholders now control the world. British Gas gave us a recent example of how it controls its small shareholders, who were lured into giving up their money on the understanding that they would have some power over that company. The Crown Agents may well run amok in the same way as British Gas has done in part of its operations. That would be a shame.

I believe that one of the main factors in driving the Crown Agents into the private sector was the World bank—the bank of the old days rather than the new ones. It is a joy to know that GDZ has held out against the transfer and is likely to continue to do so.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): Does my hon. Friend agree that a certain contradiction is apparent from the three interventions from Conservative Members? The hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) said that there was nothing wrong with profit-taking, but that, nevertheless, the Crown Agents will not be allowed to take profits but must redistribute them. At the same time, however, the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) said that, if the Crown Agents was taken back into the public sector, its future prosperity would be put at risk. The hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) then drew a parallel between it and British Gas, which makes profits and takes profits. Does my hon. Friend agree that those Conservative Members must say clearly whether they see the Crown Agents as a privatised and profit-making business or as a public service working within the private sector. It is not clear which line the Government are taking and it seems that Conservative Members are split on it.

Mr. Enright: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend.

We can go further. The real problem of the Crown Agents is the disgracefully decreasing amount of aid that this country disburses. The Prime Minister and others are fond of comparing us with the rest of Europe. In fact, if we are compared with the rest of Europe in the amount of money, in the lack of increase in money, in our reduction in bilateral aid and in our attack on Lomé, it is obvious that the home markets are shrinking for the Crown Agents, and that must be a factor.

Finally, I join the Minister in the tribute that he paid to the Crown Agents for what they did in Rwanda. I have heard personally of some of the work that they did from a friend who works there, and that work was very considerable. It did not require special effort. The Crown Agents is, if you like, a seed that has been tended and has grown to flower. It is extremely effective and can spring into action year after year, season after season; that it did to great effect in the case of Rwanda.

The destruction of the Crown Agents—for that is what it is, let us make no mistake about it—is another drain on the resources that we should be giving to the developing world. It may be a short drain, it may be a long drain, but a drain it assuredly is. It would be a tragedy if, as a result of feckless behaviour, even if it were postponed until five

[Mr. Enright]

years' time, we were to lose the collection of expertise that exists in the Crown Agents, which I have seen working on the ground and whose headquarters, in the constituency of the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), I visited several times when I worked in Africa.

I wish to draw a parallel. The Prime Minister was bleating, the other lunchtime, about the lack of competitive sports in schools. He failed to recognise that the impact on games was a direct result of naive and simplistic policies in other aspects of education. When I was professionally employed, teachers of Spanish, of physics and of classics would happily go out in the evening and coach teams of a variety of sports—the hockey that he so loves, cricket, football, and rugby. The changes that have been made, naively, in schools have had an impact on school sports, as many of us said would happen at the time that the changes were made.

As the present Administration is set, if I read it aright, treating the Crown Agents in that way will have a similar impact on its effectiveness. The Minister and the Baroness must tread with care.

6.13 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) because he and I have many interests in common. However, I disagree totally with what he said about the purpose of the Bill. I would not be standing here to support it if I thought for a moment that it was designed to make the Crown Agents less effective and in any way to reduce our development effort. I also share with the hon. Gentleman the trust that he has in Baroness Chalker, which I think is widely shared. Indeed, I share that trust with my hon. Friend the Minister who introduced the Bill, who also has common interests.

I think that the hon. Member for Hemsworth was a little unkind about the Treasury, speaking about the hard-nosed Treasury. The Treasury and the Prime Minister have been foremost in the world in trying to relieve sub-Saharan debt. They have argued more strongly than anyone in the international forum for Trinidad terms plus. Indeed, the Chancellor did a tremendous job in Washington in proposing something that I know that he and I agree about—the relieving of debt—going as far as proposing selling International Monetary Fund gold, which is Oxfam's policy. It is hardly a hard-nosed Treasury that consistently and strongly proposes policies such as that.

When my hon. Friend the Minister introduced the Bill, he spoke about the many friends that the Crown Agents has. I admit, in my experience of development and on the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, those friends are a very select band. Most people would say that the Crown Agents is unknown, unsung and unrewarded for the efforts that the Minister described in such graphic detail and to which others paid tribute.

It might be a penalty for the Crown Agents that it has been in existence for so long—160 years—that its role has become lost in the sands of time. It has stayed in business because it has a reputation for integrity and impartiality and it has constantly adjusted to the changing circumstances in which it operates. As I see it, the Bill is another step in that direction.

It is important to realise that, since the Crown Agents Act 1979, the Crown Agents has received no subsidies from Government and has repaid £15 million of its initial debt capital.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) made great play of the difference between the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the Crown Agents and the reason why they are not treated similarly. It is obvious that the CDC has a totally different role from that of the Crown Agents. The CDC, as I have seen it all over the world, has the job of investing its own money for profit, but at profit margins smaller than those of the private sector. It offers long terms of repayment. It also has a role of encouraging further investment from the private sector in developing countries, especially countries that do not attract private investment.

I cannot imagine a private sector CDC being able to carry out that role because people would simply ask, "Why does it not invest directly?" It has a catalytic role, which is crucial. The Rothschild committee in Jamaica, which brought in many American business men to revive industry in Jamaica, did not work because they expected a return in three years, and Jamaican industries simply could not make a return in three years, although they could make a return in 10 years—and have done. That is why the CDC schemes in Jamaica have been so successful.

By contrast, the Crown Agents' main work has always been as agent of independent Governments and, increasingly, aid agencies. There is no role for Government in what are properly business decisions, so I strongly believe that the transfer to the private sector of the Crown Agents will enable it to meet the needs of customers such as by removing unnecessary restrictions.

As has been said, the Crown Agents is an international business, but with a social purpose. Of course it makes a profit. It is projected to make a profit in 1994 of £800,000. I am sure that the hon. Member for Hemsworth and I would want it to remain in profit, especially if the profits are given to a foundation to re-invest in development issues. The last thing that I would want is an unprofitable organisation, wherever the profits go, because if it does not make a profit, in the end it closes down. It is crucial that that is recognised, and it is important that the foundation is set up in a way that reflects that developmental need.

As we know, the Crown Agents operates in 150 countries with representatives in 38 and has orders worth more than $400 million world wide on behalf of clients, including the United Nations, the World bank, the European Commission and the Japanese Government. It is important to recognise that less than 30 per cent. of Crown Agents' income originates in Britain. As the hon. Member for Eccles said, although its activities are particularly helpful to small and medium-sized British firms that are trying to break into international export markets, the bulk of its business is generated world wide.

Mr. Enright: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. I wish to probe his previous point. I believe that the Bill is too skeletal and too limited in its outlining of the foundation. Therefore, it is a question of whether one trusts the Government. I accept that the hon. Gentleman trusts the Government and I hope that he will accept that I do not genuinely trust the Government. If he were in my shoes, would he agree with me?

Mr. Lester: I have always been a very trusting person and I have not been let down too often. I trust not only this Government but a subsequent Government to bring to the House the changes in the Bill and to uphold the tradition of the foundation. We must ensure that the Crown Agents' energies and efforts continue to culminate in a profit—which is a measure of its success—so that the money can be reinvested, through the foundation, in things in which the hon. Member for Hemsworth and I are interested.

We have talked about the range of issues and projects in which the Crown Agents is involved. Perhaps not everyone knows that it has improved municipal finances in China and assisted with tax computerisation in Nigeria. Many hon. Members have mentioned its significant involvement with convoys in the former Yugoslavia. I know from my own use of the know-how fund in the former Soviet Union that the Crown Agents played a vital role in that area.

The Minister referred in passing to the Crown Agents stamp bureau which provides, on an agency basis, high quality stamp programmes and design, procurement and marketing services for more than one quarter of the world's postal administrations. Perhaps the stamp collectors of the world do not fully appreciate the Crown Agents' achievements in that area.

The Foreign Affairs Select Committee has taken a continuing interest in the Crown Agents and the Government have undertaken to prepare a paper to present to the Select Committee. They are willing to look at other means of providing information about Government proposals. The Foreign Affairs Select Committee acts increasingly as the House's monitor on a whole range of issues. We are constantly concerned about a variety of matters, such as the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the Crown Agents, and I am sure that the Select Committee will jealously protect the Government's promise to keep the Select Committee informed about the many issues that have been raised in the House.

What would the foundation do, and how would it change the present system? The foundation could expand its own right business, and some examples have been given of how that could be achieved. The foundation could accept contracts from private sector clients, which it is currently unable to do in Britain, and it could accept contracts from public sector bodies in the United Kingdom other than the Overseas Development Administration. That is a valuable development for the Crown Agents.

The foundation may also take investment decisions which presently require ministerial consent, including entering into partnerships and appointing directors of subsidiaries which will free the foundation's operations. Most importantly—of course, if hon. Members do not trust the foundation, it is not as significant—it will be free from financial controls imposed by the Government. I support what the hon. Member for Eccles said about privatisation having a positive effect on British companies. I think that the foundation will be in a far better position, as it will be stronger and better able to attract overseas customers on behalf of British exporters.

The ODA has a very important interest in the success of the Crown Agents because it undertakes about 95 per cent. of ODA finance procurements. Of the procurement done by the Crown Agents for the ODA in the past three years, about 45 per cent., by value, in each year has been in core countries. It should be recognised that the ODA has a keen interest in ensuring that the Crown Agents continues to work on its behalf. I do not believe that the disaster relief committee could have operated effectively without the Crown Agents' expertise in delivering humanitarian aid which has expanded enormously. I am sure that the Bill will make a great deal of difference in that area in future.

All hon. Members recognise that the real value of the Crown Agents lies not in its physical assets, but in its personal assets—the people, the traditions and the concepts under which it operates. It has undergone major restructuring in recent years and costs have been cut. I welcome the Minister's response to my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) that there are no plans for any further redundancies. It is now a matter of expanding on the present basis.

It is also important to recognise that important key clients, such as the World bank, the European Union and the Japanese, in particular, are satisfied that the Crown Agents' business will continue to be viable once it has changed.

As I said earlier, more than 70 per cent. of the Crown Agents' business is derived from developmental sources other than Britain. It is a remarkable achievement for a British agency to attract that degree of support, and it bodes well for the foundation's future. It has satisfied its clients that the confidentiality of its relationships with them will be fully respected.

In conclusion, I turn to the question of pensions. Whenever there is a change in status of a body—particularly one as involved as the Crown Agents—it is extremely important to reassure those who have given and who continue to give their services to the agency about their pension provision. I accept the Minister's assurance that the assets of the current pension funds are well ahead of what is needed in order to support the current pension base. There are no plans to change the present pension arrangements. The value of a pension surplus is a very important part of any transition and it is vital to hold together the people who have such a successful track record.

I support the Bill. We must ensure that the foundation has a very clear developmental role. We must also make sure that, when the Crown Agents is released from government control, it will continue to have a developmental impact and to give its expertise freely throughout the world. It must use the resources that it generates to continue to perform the valuable work of a foundation which has a long-term social developmental objective.

6.27 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) speaks with great authority and from a considerable reservoir of knowledge about developmental matters. It is a matter of genuine regret that I do not find myself of the same cast of mind as him this evening.

All hon. Members agree about two things: first, that warm and generous tribute should be paid to the Crown Agents for its past and continuing work; and, secondly, that we should propose the early canonisation of Baroness Chalker. No doubt to her considerable alarm, she seems to have attracted uninhibited support and congratulations from both sides of the House.

[Mr. Menzies Campbell]

I doubt that the House has been asked on many previous occasions to approve legislation that has been drawn in such exiguous terms. Perhaps we should congratulate the Minister on managing to get through his speech without showing any of the embarrassment to which the saintly Baroness Chalker admitted from time to time during the debate in the House of Lords when she was quite properly pressed about matters of detail and found herself unable to answer the questions.

The debate would inevitably have been better informed had we all had access to the Coopers and Lybrand report. I understand that it has not been given a wide circulation, nor indeed has it been leaked in the past 24 hours on the grounds of commercial confidentiality. Of course, commercial confidentiality is a proper basis for the restriction of circulation of documents, but it normally applies to financial matters.

I cannot understand why a report, which no doubt contains important sections on structures, could not have been released, at least in respect of the structures. It would have been a matter of great interest to all right hon. and hon. Members to know precisely what Coopers and Lybrand said about the foundation and the relationship between the company which is to be formed and the foundation. It is a matter of regret that we have not seen the report, even in a bowdlerised form which would have allowed us to make a more informed judgment about the nature of the proposed structures.

The structures are extremely unusual. We have passed the arid debate over whether or not it is a privatisation. It is now generally agreed that it can be described as a privatisation. It is a pretty unusual one, however, because, so far as I know, none of the others have been accompanied by the creation of a foundation.

In the light of the events in the past week or so, it takes a certain amount of nerve to refer to the gas privatisation as a paradigm of privatisation and something to which we should all aspire. Considering the matter from a structural point of view, it is notable that when the gas industry was privatised, no one found it necessary to create a foundation in advance of the privatisation.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: The hon. Gentleman talks about the paradigm of British Gas and its good works. Would not the environmentally friendly development of gas in Kazakhstan be a particular example of those good works? Would not the massive improvement to the urban gas network in Buenos Aires and to pipelines elsewhere in Latin America represent other good works which would never have happened in the bad old nationalised industry days?

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman believes in the gospel according to privatisation, but those who attended the British Gas annual general meeting last week took a rather different view. It takes a particular courage in the House this week to suggest that everything that happened in the name of the privatisation of the gas industry has been perfect.

I return to structure. The fact that it has been found necessary to introduce that intermediate step is in itself an acknowledgement that the privatisation is rather different in character from any of the others. Ultimately, it comes down to a question, as some have said, of trust and, as others have said, of belief.

I do not believe that the legislation has provided the House with sufficient detail about the disposal of the business and the future character of the foundation. That was clearly part of the rather concerted, and some might say successful attack mounted by the Opposition in the other place.

There will be no parliamentary scrutiny of the transfer to the successor business. I understand that an amendment was proposed in the other place which was not accepted and which would have allowed for scrutiny at that time. I cannot imagine why the House could not consider such an issue at that stage, but no doubt we may be told why in due course.

One is left with the overwhelming impression that what we have here is enabling legislation—admittedly, so described—that provides inadequate details of precisely what may result in the end. One is drawn to the conclusion that it would almost be better to have a privatisation such as the gas privatisation as that would force the Government to come clean about precisely what they intended to do and there would have to be legislation setting out all the details that we are now denied. In those circumstances, we would have to have the very detail being denied to us at the moment.

I shall not detain the House any longer. I do not doubt the sincerity of the Minister, but he is asking the House to take too much on trust, and for that reason I shall certainly advise my colleagues to vote against the Second Reading of the Bill.

6.34 pm

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): The debate has at least two characteristics in common with the debate on the Bill in another place. The first is that it has been an opportunity for general expressions of admiration for my noble friend Lady Chalker. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) paid tribute to her, as did the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and, most recently, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). That was one characteristic of the debate in another place.

Mr. Enright: May I emphasise the fact that in the present bunch of Ministers Lady Chalker shines out like a beacon?

Mr. Luff: She is one of the many causes for celebration about the Government, and another is my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, who opened the debate and who will reply to it.

Another characteristic of the debate, as in another place, is that it is clear that the activities of the Crown Agents command widespread and universal support. There was a mood both here and in another place that nothing should be done to inhibit it from continuing to perform its valuable role and that it should be encouraged to develop and expand that role.

I first became aware of the Crown Agents through my interest in stamp collecting, as you probably did, Mr. Deputy Speaker. During the recent recess I browsed through the collections of my father and grandfather and wondered how many stamps in those albums had been procured as a direct result of activities of the Crown Agents.

We have been reminded on a number of occasions that the Crown Agents remains responsible for the stamps of about one quarter of the word's postal administrations. Perhaps that simple fact led a number of journalists to jump to the wrong conclusions about the Bill.

We read in *The Times* on 12 November 1994:

"The scrapping of the Post Office plans"—

the plans to privatise the Post Office—

"prompted the Prime Minister to back down his earlier opposition to proposals to privatise the Crown Agents. Plans to allow the Crown Agents to leave the public sector were shelved earlier this week after Mr. Major and Cabinet colleagues decided that it would provoke damaging opposition. However, last week's Post Office decision revived calls from senior ministers . . . to let the Crown Agents go into private hands."

That is a bizarre conspiracy theory by any standards. The article continued:

"The plan to privatise the body will prompt fears that Britain will lose some of its international influence, and in particular lead to a decline in foreign investment in Britain."

However, quite the opposite is true. The Bill is necessary to enable the Crown Agents to continue to perform its excellent work.

The Daily Telegraph fell victim to the same conspiracy theory:

"A scheme the plan to privatise the Crown Agents has been revived by the Government after the collapse of plans to sell the Royal Mail".

I do not understand how any serious journalist can sustain that argument. My hon. Friend the Minister made it clear that the privatisation is not one from which any revenues will flow to the Exchequer. In no sense can it be construed as enabling us to fund tax cuts—not that I accept that as an argument for privatisation. It is a privatisation strictly on the merits of what freeing up an organisation will enable it to do.

The Crown Agents currently operates at no cost to the taxpayer, and since its incorporation in 1979 it has received no subsidy either. How many of the current privatised industries could say that? It has paid about £20 million in capital and interest to the Government and the only modest cash flow resulting from privatisation is the repayment of some £2 million in debt. The privatisation is being carried out because it is right for the organisation.

The Crown Agents is a crucial part of the aid programme. It may be true, as a number of hon. Members made clear, that about 70 per cent. of its business comes from foreign principals and only about 30 per cent. from the British Government. But the Crown Agents' role within the British aid programme is still crucial. It must be allowed to flourish and continue to perform its role to the best of its abilities.

We know that the British aid programme is one of the most effective in the world; that can certainly be said of our bilateral aid programme. The United Kingdom is a member of the development assistance committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Part of the departmental report of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office reads:

"The Development Assistance Committee periodically reviews the aid programmes of its members. In 1994, the UK aid programme was reviewed, and was commended on its highly concessional, business-like bilateral aid programme largely oriented towards the poorest developing countries."

The Crown Agents is extremely important to that aid programme.

Three bodies are especially important—I may have overlooked others—each of which the Government are wisely treating slightly differently. Apart from the Crown Agents, there is the Commonwealth Development Corporation and the British Council. The council, which often seems to be simply an education organisation, has an important role to play in the aid programme. I shall quote again from the Foreign Office report. It states:

"In 1994-95 ODA will provide some £33.7 million for the British Council and the grant-in-aid arrangements. These resources are being used to implement programmes in developing countries that achieve objectives central to British aid policy. Priority has been given to human development, environmental protection, health and population activities, open and accountable government and economic policy reform."

The British Council operates on essentially a non-commercial basis with grant in aid from the Government.

The week before last, I was in Barcelona as a member of the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs. I am delighted to say—*[Interruption.]* I can assure the House that I and other members of the Select Committee were there for good reasons. I learned in Barcelona that the British Council's language teaching operations are paying for the cost of its overall activity. The council may not be a strictly commercial organisation but it is performing well.

Mr. Foulkes: The House needs to know—those of us who are sitting through this long debate will find it fascinating to know—why the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs was in Barcelona. I hope that its members, especially those who are Conservative Members, took on board how successful devolution has been in Spain, as it has in other countries. It is—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This is all extremely interesting but the hon. Member knows that he is going wide of the debate.

Mr. Luff: Much as I would like to respond to the hon. Gentleman's intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to stretch your patience.

Another organisation that plays a crucial role apart from the Crown Agents is the Commonwealth Development Corporation, which essentially provides concessional loans to enable the private sector to develop within the developing world. The Government have said—in my view, rightly—that such activity should not be privatised. It is important to remember, however, that the Government have said that the CDC's activities should be market tested.

The Crown Agents falls into a third and distinct category from the two other organisations that I have mentioned. The *Financial Times* has described the Crown Agents as one of the world's "biggest purchasing organisations". It has a considerable role in aid delivery. In the 1993 annual report, the managing director of the Crown Agents stated:

"Increasingly, as aid becomes subject to a more detailed cost-benefit scrutiny than in previous cycles, we find ourselves able to demonstrate our effectiveness on several levels. Our cost effectiveness in the actual spending of aid is self-evident. Yet we can also monitor the aid process, interfacing between donor and client to provide surety to each that their money is being well spent, and we can manage and train recipients to handle effectively and accountably the funds made available to them."

I am not one of those who believes that the quantum of the aid budget is the sole measure by which we should establish whether the Government have a responsible

[Mr. Luff]

attitude to the developing world. My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe reminded us of the excellent work that is being done by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on debt relief issues, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. The International Monetary Fund has been called upon to dispose of part of its gold stocks. A significant aid budget is, however, an important part of our contribution to the developing world. It is crucial that our constituents should feel that the money is well spent.

One of the most important factors that would undermine the support enjoyed in the country as a whole for the aid budget would be any feeling that the moneys directed to it were being badly spent. We have already heard that the OECD regards the British overseas aid budget as well spent, and a crucial role is played by the Crown Agents in ensuring that the moneys are well spent. We must not undermine that activity.

The Crown Agents is an extremely large organisation; it is much larger than most people realise. It serves about 150 different countries and provides a range of services to aid agencies beyond the British Government—for example, the United Nations, the World bank, the European Union and, especially, Japan. It has carried out work for many large public sector organisations throughout the world. I have talked to one or two representatives of those who have benefited from the services of the Crown Agents. I have been delighted to hear of the support that its work enjoys among many organisations and of the strong feeling that the organisation represents excellent value for money.

A bewildering range of projects is pursued by the Crown Agents, which ranges from bank training in Tashkent to humanitarian relief in Macedonia. Its work is expanding into banking. In the 1994 annual report, the managing director, Peter Berry, stated:

"Through Crown Agents Financial Services Ltd . . . we are developing and expanding our role as a recognized specialist provider of banking financial advisory services relating to the disbursement of development aid and the financial control of development projects."

As I have said, Crown Agents is a bewilderingly large organisation. Most of its activities are closely related to the private sector. Indeed, it has a close and intimate relationship with the privatisation process itself. In the 1994 annual report, an entire page is dedicated to its work on privatisation and commercialisation. In the context of the Bill, it is worth examining what it is doing in more detail. We read that lecturers of the Crown Agents are delivering a series of courses at the Moscow Institute of Privatisation and Management

"to train the Institute's own trainers in passing on further instruction."

We read too that the Crown Agents' "legal advice" is helping

"in setting up privatization trust funds in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda".

We read also that the

"Administrative Staff College of Nigeria is in the forefront of enhancing the professionalism of that country's management cadre."

The Crown Agents has a close involvement in that work.

The business sector review tells us that the Crown Agents has been

"engaged in a major economics consultancy project for Japan's OECF to assess the progress of privatization in Ghana, for which we formed an Anglo-Japanese team."

It is active also in Sarawak with its economic development corporation.

Mr. Nigel Evans: Does my hon. Friend find it bizarre and ironic in many ways, especially in the light of the debate and given some of the remarks of Opposition Members, that all the countries that he has mentioned can recognise the benefits of privatisation? It seems that only Opposition Members are unable to do so.

Mr. Luff: My hon. Friend is exactly right. The Crown Agents is one of the many forces involved in exporting Britain's most successful product—privatisation—around the world. The process has been emulated by virtually every country on the globe.

I return to the review from which I was quoting. The Crown Agents is active in Romania. The review reads:

"We organized in-country seminars for the Romanian State Ownership Fund, covering the creation of a market for stocks and shares".

An organisation that is so closely committed to privatisation surely deserves to be privatised itself. I believe that the process would richly enhance the organisation's work.

It is important to remember that Crown Agents is not an organisation that deals only with commercial issues. It has a crucial role to play in humanitarian assistance in former Yugoslavia and elsewhere. It is part of the United Nations emergency response to the flight of over 1 million Rwandan refugees across the border of Zaire. The Crown Agents review tells us that its

"logisticians and equipment were airlifted to Zaire to help with . . . operations and transportation."

It has been involved also in Croatia and Malawi where it

"handled the procurement through our Durban office of maize for drought-affected Malawi, funded by the ODA."

It has been active in Angola

"on behalf of the Japanese government".

The review tells us that it

"purchased major medical equipment and ambulances for Uzbekistan."

Technical assistance was provided in the Philippines. The Crown Agents has been working in Bosnia and humanitarian aid has been delivered to Macedonia. It is interesting that it is involved with the ODA in a major project. I shall quote again from the 1994 annual report:

"We ended the year in discussions with ODA about plans to provide a full-time emergency response unit, based in Sutton but on permanent standby ready to deliver an immediate logistics response anywhere in the world, with full head office back-up."

Many hon. Members have, rightly, drawn attention to the principal asset of the Crown Agents—its staff. That is certainly the case and the country has every reason to be proud of them as well.

As Baroness Chalker reminded the House of Lords on 28 February, over the past year, some 11 members of staff of the Crown Agents have been honoured for their work in both Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. We can say with confidence that, had it not been for the work of the Crown Agents, many more lives would have been lost in both those countries.

I am a little surprised not to have had an intervention yet from an Opposition Member to ask, "If it is so successful, why change the basis on which the

organisation works?" I believe that it is important to do so for two separate but important reasons. First, I believe that it needs a greater independence than it enjoys at present. Secondly, I believe that it needs to be made more responsive to the needs of its customer base, which privatisation always achieves.

Let us take the issue of independence. We have heard that some 70 per cent. of the work of the Crown Agents is now conducted for non-United Kingdom principals. We have heard that the use of Crown Agents by the ODA has declined but remains very important in the delivery of its aid programme.

In the *Financial Times*, though, Mr. Peter Berry, the managing director of the Crown Agents, said, on 26 August:

"When you need ministerial consent to do anything materially different from the act that governs us, then there is 'a stop in the mind' against doing it. It will be very different going back to a board. There will be no disincentive to be pro-active,"—

I apologise to the hon. Member for Hemsworth for the use of that word, but it is in a quotation from Mr. Berry.

Mr. Berry continues:

"Accountability will be closer to home. It will also be easier to demonstrate to doubters that it is independent of government pressure to 'buy British'."

We have heard a great deal from Opposition Front Benchers about the role of the Crown Agents in encouraging a "Buy British" policy. I fully acknowledge that, being based in Britain, and with a large number of ex-British colonies, with members of the British Commonwealth among its client base, there will be a strong tendency to buy British, but, nevertheless, with about 70 per cent. of its business coming from non-British sources, foreign Governments want an assurance that there is not an excessive bias in the Crown Agents work to British suppliers. The independence that privatisation will bring to the organisation is hugely important and will help the organisation to flourish again.

What about responsiveness? A very interesting point indeed, which, I am glad to say, was raised by the Opposition Front Bench, is the ability of the organisation, as a result of the privatisation, to start to provide services within the United Kingdom. I think that that will be an extremely healthy development indeed. Other important United Kingdom purchasing organisations have need of the services of an organisation such as the Crown Agents. That is extremely important. We know that privatisation brings responsiveness to the customer.

Opposition Members have laughed and sneered at some of the examples of privatisation, but that is simply unfair. Only this week in my postbag I received a publication from BT, in which it told me:

"On average, a BT customer is now unlikely to experience a network fault more than once every five and a half years, or experience more than one inland call in 200 failing because of the network."

We do not have to cast our minds very far back to remember the old state-owned BT, and remember what a radical transformation there has been of the particular organisation.

What about public payphones?

Mr. Bayley: Does the hon. Gentleman accept that it is by no means a one-way street in terms of public attitudes to BT? Earlier this week, I received a letter from one of my constituents, who complained that the telephone directories are no longer published promptly. He had been looking for the number of a company in my constituency. He was unable to find it and so was unable to get in touch with it to offer it business, because the latest telephone directory for my constituency is now 18 months old.

Mr. Luff: I am looking rather nervously at you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and wondering what you will make of this diversion into the ways of BT. As I have started, I think that I had better finish.

I am glad to say that I have had no such similar complaint. Telephone directories in the Worcester area are a great improvement on the old directories. The business pages are now separate from the residential pages. That, again, is another example of the enhanced responsiveness that privatisation brings to organisations such as British Telecom and will, I am sure, to the Crown Agents.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: On the matter of telephone directories, is not the problem, perhaps—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Telephone directories are nothing whatever to do with the Bill. We should get back to the debate on the Bill.

Mr. Luff: Bearing in mind that ruling, I shall not refer to the vast improvement in public payphones that has resulted from the privatisation of British Telecom. It is important to remember that privatisation can put organisations into a world-class position. I am sure that that is a position that Crown Agents already enjoys, but I am sure that that position will be enhanced if this process continues.

I was interested to read—I shall make this very brief comment, Mr. Deputy Speaker—that BT is now about to become

"the first operator to abolish unit charging across its entire network, increasing almost threefold the number of telephone lines"—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is trying my patience now, whether he is being brief or not. He must get back to the Bill.

Mr. Luff: I hear what you say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and of course I shall respect your ruling, but the point is that privatisation of the Crown Agents will bring benefits to the organisation, the staff and its customers. Every privatisation that we have so far had in this country has shown precisely that pattern, and the pattern will be repeated when the Bill is enacted.

I see no problem whatever with moving the Crown Agents into the private sector, but I have some questions to ask the Minister about the structure of the privatisation that is envisaged, not in the Bill, as has been made clear, but in the process that will follow after enactment—the transfer of Crown Agents to the foundation.

I have heard it suggested that one of the principal reasons why the Government have followed this proposed route of privatisation is because the Japanese Government, the second largest customer of Crown Agents, were unhappy about the prospect of a full-blown privatisation and then having to deal simply with another private sector organisation. I do not know whether that is right, but the foundation's structure, which has been set up—not in the Bill but in ministerial speeches that have accompanied the Bill—is novel, to say the least.

I share some of the reservations that have been expressed about the absence of detail, and particularly about the absence of memoranda and articles of

[Mr. Luff]

association of the new Crown Agents. I hope that the novel structure does not represent a loss of confidence in privatisation itself. Given the success of privatisation, I am sure that we would not want to send that message to our constituents.

Where does the idea for the foundation come from? Has it come from the Crown Agents? It seems to me, from reading some of the material in preparation for this speech, that Crown Agents has introduced the idea of a foundation, or was the idea driven by the Government? Will the foundation that the Government promise be sufficiently commercial?

The *Financial Times* described the foundation as having a structure

"similar to the Wellcome Foundation, the health insurance groups PPP and Bupa, the motoring organisations the AA and the RAC and the British Standards Institute."

An official at the ODA, to which the Crown Agents answers, said that it will be entirely commercial in its approach and will be expected to make a return, but profits will be ploughed back into the agency. It will answer to a board of directors, which will be selected from a cross-section of its users, including foreign aid agencies and exporters. By not exposing it to the pressure of shareholder interests, it will be able to act more easily in its own interests and in the interests of clients in the developing world.

One of the advantages of privatisation is that companies become responsive to shareholder interests. I worry that perhaps the Government have not gone far enough in this particular privatisation.

The board of the Crown Agents said, in its 1993 annual report, that it recognised that the preponderance of non-UK clients

"might make it more desirable for the ownership of the Crown Agents to reflect a wider base than that of UK Government. As an alternative, the Board therefore recommended that the business and assets of the Crown Agents should be transferred to a specially formed foundation."

That seems to suggest that the drive for this has come from the Crown Agents itself.

I worry about the details that we have so far about the foundation. We read that it will have a two-tier structure with the foundation being the sole owner of the operating company. Does that mean that the foundation will be able to purchase other organisations with broadly similar objectives to Crown Agents?

I worry whether Crown Agents will indeed be able to register as a charity, and whether that is the right route if trading is the major activity. I know that that issue was discussed in another place, but I do not think an entirely satisfactory answer was given.

I welcome the fact that the memorandum and articles of association are to be tightly drawn up to reflect and build on the social, ethical and developmental principles on which the Crown Agents business is based, but those have not yet been published.

I also read among the conditions of the new foundation that the operating company will be able to pass its profits to the foundation. The foundation will not distribute dividends but will use any profits in the Crown Agents business in pursuit of its overall objectives. Does that mean that such profits can be applied to activities outside those of the Crown Agents in new companies, new organisations or other kinds of activity?

I would also appreciate more clarification on the members of the foundation. We read that they are not to be appointed by Ministers in order to guarantee the independence of the organisation. I presume that that means—I think that I understood my hon. Friend the Minister to say this in his opening remarks—that the current members of the board of Crown Agents will appoint the new members of the foundation.

Mr. Baldry *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Luff: I see my hon. Friend shaking his head so I must be wrong, but I should like to know how the members of the foundation will be appointed. We know who will not do it, but who will do it?

If anything, although the Bill might go far enough, the follow-on procedures do not. I, unlike the hon. Members for Eccles (Miss Lestor) and for Hemsworth, would have preferred a full-blown trade sale of the organisation to a reputable body with a carefully drawn memorandum and articles of association, perhaps, as a quid pro quo, with a golden share for the Government lasting rather longer than the five years envisaged as part of the foundation treatment. That would give the Crown Agents the true freedom that it needs to win the battles in the world.

The Bill is much better than the status quo and I have no hesitation in supporting it in the Lobby tonight. However, I hope that we are giving the Crown Agents a sufficiently free rein.

7 pm

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to take part in this important debate. I declare my interest as a former stamp collector. No doubt, at some stage, I too managed to collect stamps from around the world which were purchased and provided by Crown Agents. In addition, I do not intend to be the only one this evening not to give my support to Baroness Chalker for her fine work in bringing forward this valuable and important legislation.

Much has been said this evening about the concept of privatisation. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) referred to the theory going around that the legislation has been brought forward because of the lack of such legislation for the Post Office. That is arrant nonsense. Even to compare the two privatisations is ridiculous. I, like many of my hon. Friends, would have far preferred to see the privatisation of the Post Office, with certain provisions for rural areas, to allow it to prosper and flourish in the private sector. That is not to be, but the privatisation of Crown Agents has nothing to do with the attempt to privatise the Post Office. It has been brought forward on its own merits and should be supported on its own merits.

Much has also been said this evening about the profit motive and about whether an organisation such as Crown Agents should be allowed to make a profit and, if so, what it should do with that profit. It is vital that we encourage Crown Agents to be as profitable and businesslike as possible. As has already been said, its profits will be reinvested in the good work of the organisation. Baroness Chalker said in the other place that no dividends would be given to shareholders per se, but that the money would be reinvested in the Crown Agents' good work.

Crown Agents has a long history. Before 1979 it was unincorporated. The current Act gives it a strong regulatory framework, following some misguided forays on its own account which came to light in the mid-1970s. Since 1979, Crown Agents has been profitable and has received no Government subsidy. There is no good reason for it to remain in the public sector. It is a truly international organisation with a fine reputation, as we have heard. We must ensure that, whatever changes are made, that reputation remains untarnished and its good work continues.

The Overseas Development Administration is no longer the largest client of Crown Agents. As we have heard, it provides only 30 per cent. of its current business. Crown Agents needs greater freedom to take business decisions, while its clients, including the ODA, look to it to maintain the highest standards and impartiality for which it is rightly renowned.

Mr. Bayley: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman did not intend to mislead the House when he said that the British Government were no longer the Crown Agents' biggest customer. They are, of course, the Crown Agents' biggest customer, but no longer its only customer.

Mr. Evans: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I obviously would not wish to mislead anyone. I simply put it on the record that 30 per cent. of ODA money will go through Crown Agents.

The interests of clients and aid programmes would be well served if the organisation could operate with greater freedom than the Crown Agents Act 1979 allows. Therefore, it should be accepted on both sides of the House—I was surprised to hear some of the reservations expressed tonight—that the 1979 Act is out of date and needs to be changed along the lines suggested by the Minister.

As we have heard, Crown Agents is a major international supplier of procurement, financial management and technical services to clients in some 150 countries, including bilateral aid donors and multilateral agencies such as the World bank, the United Nations and the European Union. It plays an important role in assisting the Overseas Development Administration to implement the bilateral aid programme. Crown Agents is a vital aspect of developing the third world. Its agricultural assistance—crop storage and development—energy advisory service, power generation distribution and water supply and sanitation systems all add up to a highly proficient package for those who need it.

That sterling work includes the safe delivery of emergency aid in Bosnia and Rwanda. The Library research paper documents clearly some of the excellent work done by Crown Agents. I was in Croatia in December and I went to Pale in the previous January to see some of the work being done there. I am sure that the House knows of the devastation currently being visited on that region. We all wish that the peace process was more constructive, and we must be realistic about the problems faced in that region. We should applaud the work of Crown Agents in that regard because it is one of the unsung heroes of the conflict. Everyone talks about the work of other agencies, but Crown Agents is rarely mentioned. Its work in ensuring that aid gets through is vital. I wish that it did not need to be there in the first place.

From what I have heard today, it is clear that Crown Agents is a good organisation which needs to be freed up, but freed up in such a way that it fulfils the important social and developmental objectives that we all share. As we know only too well, today everyone has to pay his or her way and it is right that Crown Agents should do so, too; it should trade fairly and profitably. We must accept that this is an era of rapid change in world trading patterns. My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester referred to the way in which the world has changed and other countries' privatisation policies, and Crown Agents must square up to that. There are new challenges to be faced throughout the world.

One need think only of the finalising of the Uruguay round and the establishment of the World Trade Organisation to realise that there has been a phenomenal change in world trading patterns in recent years. It is the Government's duty to see that Crown Agents is in a position to benefit from those changes and to improve its commercial activities. That is what the Bill does. It is an enabling Bill, in effect transferring Crown Agents to an independent foundation.

The Bill provides enabling powers for the Secretary of State to vest the corporation's assets, rights and liabilities in a Government-owned share company and, in time, to an independent foundation. The company will thus be transferred. The present statutory corporation will be dissolved once its remaining functions have been satisfactorily discharged. That seems perfectly reasonable to me. The new way forward for Crown Agents appears to be commercial, although not in a revenue-raising sense; the £2 million of outstanding debt is likely to be paid off, but little else will be. That is why the suggestion that this is the privatisation to replace that of the Post Office is ridiculous. The Crown Agents will answer to a board of directors, which will be selected from a cross-section of its users, including foreign aid agencies and exporters. That, too, strikes me as a fine idea.

Throughout the discussions on the future of Crown Agents, I have been as delighted by the attitude of my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development as everyone else. She has heeded two key aspects when changing the structure of the organisation: consultation and flexibility. The consultation process has been comprehensive. The Minister announced her intentions back in August 1993, giving plenty of notice to interested parties who might wish to contribute to the mechanics of the Bill. The Bill clearly allows for considerable flexibility in its implementation—which should be welcomed, rather than subjected to the criticism offered by Opposition Members.

The changes advocated by the Bill will maintain the "honest broker" status of the organisation. I hope and expect that the Crown Agents' 18 overseas offices and UK-based marketing force will continue to provide their splendid monitoring service of central tender boards. That is best done via a broadly based organisation. No doubt the agency will continue its role in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. I recently visited both Moscow and the republic of Azerbaijan—not, I hasten to add, with the Select Committee on Welsh Affairs, but under other auspices—and I saw the gains to be made from the training of staff in procurement agencies in those states. I saw definite benefits for agriculture, energy, health and transport.

[Mr. Evans]

It is plain that the core of the Crown Agents' business is buying, and that its other activities ultimately support the buying activity. Surely that is an ideal set-up for the kind of changes that the Bill will bring. Greater autonomy will allow the multi-disciplinary nature of Crown Agents to blossom—in particular the technical services, which allow the work of the aid programme to flourish.

I fully support the Government's aim to recreate Crown Agents as an independent foundation with a social purpose and continued developmental objectives. In addition, Crown Agents will no longer be limited to serving aid agencies and other public bodies as its present constitution dictates: in fact, newly established private corporations in the developing world, which used to be Crown Agents' clients when it was Government-owned and would like to continue to be supplied by Crown Agents but are prohibited by its present constitution, will be able to become its clients again when the Bill is enacted.

Many of the Crown Agents' former trainees now occupy positions of great importance for UK exports, including directorships—or their equivalent—of Government supplies in countries as diverse as Sri Lanka, Malawi, Saudi Arabia and Papua New Guinea. I am sure that their loyalty will continue with the new agency. I have been fortunate enough to visit both Malawi and Sri Lanka—although, again, not with the Welsh Select Committee—and have observed that the wisdom of Crown Agents is vital to the development of those countries' infrastructure.

I was in Malawi last summer, just before the general election there—the first election held in Malawi for more than 30 years. It was a great pleasure to see democracy rolling across the country. There is no doubt that Malawi is not only one of the poorest countries in Africa but one of the poorest in the world. The work of Crown Agents has ensured that supplies get through as quickly as possible, particularly when the area is devastated as it was during the recent drought, and that the maximum number of lives are preserved. I hope that last year's elections and the change of Government in Malawi will give the country a shot in the arm, and the chance to develop in the way that is best for it rather than a way imposed on it from outside or, indeed, from within by powers acting for their own ends.

Malawi has great tourism potential. Other parts of Africa have been able to benefit in that way, but so far Malawi has not. Perhaps its past character has been part of the problem. I hope that the new democratic Government will be able to open its doors to many more tourists, particularly from the United Kingdom. Many tourists visit Malawi because Crown Agents has been there and ensured that the country has not suffered, although it could easily have done so. I hope that tourism, alongside aid, will ensure Malawi's future.

It is easy for us to think that the fact that a country such as Malawi is in receipt of aid in itself constitutes a long-term future. That patently is not true. People living in Malawi need something a bit more secure: they need a future outside aid from countries such as the United Kingdom. I believe that it can benefit from tourism, just as South Africa did as a result of a change of Government and the opening of its doors—and that country has also benefited from the work of Crown Agents.

Crown Agents has given Malawi other aid: for instance, the local government development project in 1994-95, Malawi fisheries training in 1993, the Lake Malawi fisheries research vessel and the evaluation of ODA fisheries programme in 1988.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Evans: I should be delighted to.

Mr. Arnold: Is it not significant that the Crown Agents project was funded by the World bank—by a foreign rather than a specifically British donor? Is it not even more significant that Crown Agents was seen as a channel to bring local government experience from Britain to bear in Malawi?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's only relevant point was contained in the two words "Crown Agents".

Mr. Evans: It was Crown Agents that was able to facilitate the programme to which I referred.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have been patient, but the hon. Gentleman has strayed from the Bill. He has persisted in using the words "Crown Agents", which has enabled me to remain in my seat, but I hope that he will return to the Bill.

Mr. Evans: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I shall leave the subject of Malawi, but I felt that it was important to give a specific example of a country of which I have some experience, where I have seen the work that is going on. [HON. MEMBERS: "Done by Crown Agents."] Yes. Thank you.

The Crown Agents' report shows that good work is being done in other countries, however. Sri Lanka is an example. As I said earlier, I had an opportunity to go there. The problems of such countries cannot be overestimated. In Sri Lanka, the war involving the Tamil Tigers is unfortunately still going on, even following last year's change of Government.

Reform of Crown Agents is long overdue. It will bring a breath of fresh air to a successful organisation that is currently being stifled. At the same time, I see no reason why it should not retain its reputation for impartiality in advising the cheapest and most effective way of supplying projects. This evening, the word "privatisation" has been bandied about as something for which we should apologise, but I am not apologetic—not in this case, or in the case of the other 47 industries that we have privatised since 1979. Each of those companies are far better privatised than they would have been in state ownership.

The same refreshing attitude as is visible in the industries that we are discussing is possible in this context. By no stretch of the imagination can they be described as perfect, but they are far better privatised than they would be if they were run by the state. When the Bill is enacted, Crown Agents will be given the same impetus.

7.19 pm

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): When I first saw the Bill emerge from the House of Lords on to our Order Paper for consideration, my heart sank slightly. I thought, "My goodness, here we go again. Do we really have to stir a pot totally unnecessarily?" I looked at the Bill with some trepidation because of the recent immense rows

about certain privatised industries and wondered whether we were unnecessarily letting ourselves in for further trouble.

I therefore made it my business to listen to what was said by our right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker of Wallasey, the Minister for Overseas Development, because both Houses have great respect for her work for overseas development over many years as a Minister both in this House and in the other place. She has terrific experience of international affairs and overseas development, especially in Africa, where much of the work of Crown Agents takes place. In going in some detail through her comments on the Bill and its related privatisation, it gave me considerable encouragement to see the advantages that could flow from the Bill's proposals.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) spoke earlier and we will shortly hear from my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), if she catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As Crown Agents is based in its home borough of Sutton, I take it that considerable anxieties would have been expressed by my hon. Friends if there was deep unease among the staff of Crown Agents. In fact, that has not been the case and, apparently, there has been much talk of opportunities for the future.

I first heard of Crown Agents, as did some of my hon. Friends, through my collection of postage stamps. That is, of course, a principal business of Crown Agents. It carries on wide-scale procurement of those wonderful articles that in the past taught me geography, history and goodness knows what else.

The other point at which I became aware of Crown Agents was the news of its disastrous performance in the 60s and 70s—decades of great moment to our socialist friends opposite, whose imprudent banking brought this proud institution almost to its knees.

During the 80s and 90s—one might say, the Tory decades—the work of Crown Agents has improved out of all recognition. It has built up a proud record of work, but it has become increasingly clear that the restrictive constraints within which it operates as a Government entity are becoming an ever-increasing restraint on its development. It is interesting to note that Crown Agents has been restructured considerably over recent years and has generated significant surpluses.

A constituent has represented to me his concern that there is no provision specifically and as such for the foundation within the text of the Bill. In considering that, I note particularly the assurances of my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development that the company would indeed be a foundation and established as a company limited by guarantee. If there is one thing that we have learnt in this House, it is that our right hon. and noble Friend is extremely honourable, and I have no doubt that the necessary structures will be followed through under the Bill's provisions.

A foundation is a highly appropriate way in which to establish the organisation. Not far from me in Gravesham in Kent is the Wellcome Foundation, which is structured in a very similar way to that proposed in this case. We know of the examples of the Automobile Association, the Royal Automobile Club, the British Standards Institution, BUPA and the PPP health care organisation, all of which operate under such structures.

The House should pay due heed to the considerable vote of confidence which has been given to the proposals in the Bill by a number of organisations which have expressed interest in becoming members of the foundation. The British Consultants Bureau, the British Chamber of Commerce, the International Chamber of Commerce and various chartered institutes, notably the Chartered Institute of Building, have shown considerable interest in participating. That can only strengthen the Government's proposals to widen the scope of participation in the important work of Crown Agents.

The business in which Crown Agents is engaged is steadily changing. In 1954, when the name was changed from Crown Agents for the Colonies to Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations, most of its business was based in the Commonwealth, the colonies and in countries that had had a close relationship with Britain, especially in respect of their administration.

Today, the work of Crown Agents is significantly different. If we consider the Crown Agents' annual report for 1994, we find that quite a bit of its business still concerns the overseas aid programme of the Overseas Development Administration and notably aid to India, South Africa and Zambia, all of which are now members of the Commonwealth. Indeed, Crown Agents has handled and managed the disbursement arrangements for 150 British bilateral aid agreements with a total value of £1.8 billion.

However, Crown Agents has spread its work wider. If we examine its programme, we can see how wide it has gone beyond the Commonwealth—to Ethiopia, for instance, where it carried out a programme of purchasing vehicles and equipment for the civilian police under the ODA programme. It has extended its operations to eastern Europe and on to Russia where it has continued its work alongside the Russian Government in managing a $350 million programme which is financed by a rehabilitation loan for imports to improve the agriculture, health, transport and coal sectors.

In view of the matters that have been discussed in the House in recent days, we should note that the Crown Agents' work in the former Yugoslavia, where it administers the convoys that deliver humanitarian aid and is responsible for recruitment, supplies, cargo movement, vehicles, vehicle workshops and logisticians involved in the World Health Organisation and the operations of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, shows the significant broadening of its work.

The House should pay due heed to that expansion beyond these shores of the Crown Agents' work. For instance, the European Community now makes considerable use of Crown Agents for the introduction of its overseas development programmes. If one were to go to the almost unpronounceable countries of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, one would see that Crown Agents has managed the inauguration of a regional bank training centre based in Uzbekistan.

In Poland, Crown Agents has provided technical assistance to the work-out department of the Bank Zachodni Spolka Akcyjna. All that was commissioned by the European Commission and the European development programme and was carried out by the Crown Agents. One could go further to the Crown Agents' assistance in Slovenia, where it is working on establishing a project co-ordinating the regional customs programme for all 11 PHARE beneficiary countries. In Syria, which is not in

[Mr. Jacques Arnold]

the Commonwealth, Crown Agents has carried out a programme on the proposed methods of financing and implementing the modernisation of the commercial bank and the central bank, as part of the European Commission's overseas aid programme.

The work of Crown Agents goes wider still. It has won World bank projects in countries such as Angola, where it has supervised the infrastructural, economic and fisheries components of the ports rehabilitation study. Together with a number of colleagues, I visited Angola at the time of its first elections; the work concerned was proving immensely important. On behalf of the World bank, Crown Agents has carried out a procurement course in Fiji, assisted in the design of an improved system of tax administration in Hungary, and provided a procurement agency service for the population and family health projects in Nepal. We have already heard about the Crown Agents' work in Papua New Guinea, establishing a specialist unit to advise, finance and help with the planning of the Government's privatisation project.

It will not surprise hon. Members to learn that Crown Agents is active in the Caribbean, where is has been commissioned by the Caribbean development bank to prepare a study on road and bridge improvements in Dominica, in the Commonwealth West Indies. Crown Agents also executed the British component of the know-how fund in Romania and Belorussia.

It might be argued that Crown Agents could carry out all this work as a nationalised agency, as in the past, but it is rapidly developing into new areas and winning new business on the basis of its expertise and excellence. It is in these new areas that the agency needs the freedom to operate independently of Government. Some of its more recent contracts are relevant in this context. It has, for instance, won a contract from the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development to conduct a technical and financial evaluation of one of Egypt's largest land reclamation projects—a task demanding considerable expertise.

Elsewhere, the agency has carried out a joint project combining our overseas aid programme and Norwegian aid in Mozambique, a country devastated by civil war and just about everything else that could go wrong. Crown Agents has designed and implemented an aid monitoring system for the Bank of Mozambique, and has validated both Norwegian and British aid programme funds.

Perhaps the most significant work that Crown Agents has done on behalf of foreign Governments—the crux of why the change has been structured in this way—relates to the major contract that it has signed with Japan to carry out Japan's aid programme in sub-Saharan Africa. Japan, now a major economy becoming increasingly involved in overseas aid, is casting around for people who know what they are doing to implement its aid programme with efficiency and integrity. Britain's experience as a colonial power in that area and as a member of the Commonwealth has resulted in bodies such as Crown Agents being admirably suited to carrying out such work. Already it has gained commissioned work from Japan to the tune of $720 million.

Crown Agents has also won business from the Asian Development bank which, perhaps surprisingly, approached the British Government to administer a programme in Micronesia. The House will recall that Micronesia consists of Japanese islands which, after the war, came under the administration of the United States and only recently achieved independence. One might therefore expect the United States or Japan to manage its overseas aid programmes, but the ADB commissioned our Crown Agents to conduct a review of Micronesia's federal education system at national and state level.

Further afield, the Swedish International Development Authority has commissioned Crown Agents to carry out its programmes in Vietnam. Financed by the Swedes and administered by the World bank, the programme was carried through by Crown Agents, enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the banking sector by means of a sustained programme of technical assistance and staff training.

This shows the modernity of the world in which Crown Agents has to operate. It is not the old-fashioned world so beloved of the socialists, which is why the agency cannot continue as a Government entity. That would prevent it from effectively developing.

The origins of, and trends in, the Crown Agents' revenue stream are significant. The last set of accounts published by Crown Agents show that 70 per cent. of its revenue now comes from overseas. I was fascinated to hear the magisterial rebuke delivered by the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) to my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans), who claimed that most of the revenue comes from overseas. I am afraid that the hon. Member for York was wrong—

Mr. Bayley: The hon. Member for Ribble Valley said that the United Kingdom accounted for most of the Crown Agents' business. That was incorrect—although the United Kingdom is its single biggest customer. The hon. Member for Ribble Valley acknowledged that that was true.

Mr. Arnold: The British overseas aid programme may be the biggest single customer, but our point is, and remains, that Crown Agents gets most of its revenue today from overseas sources. That underlines the importance of giving it maximum flexibility, as will be granted to it by privatisation.

Given the agency's in-house expertise and procurement capabilities, it is not surprising that most of its business comes in the form of advisory, financial and purchasing services. This expertise, built up over a long period, should be put to far wider use internationally. British expertise is renowned the world over, even if we are sometimes rather too modest about it.

A significant part of its business is the procurement of bank notes and stamps and vital secure documents. Britain's expert printers produce a great deal of such material. Crown Agents should rely on the excellence for which it is famous and should be free to be flexible.

I expected the debate to be incredibly boring and thought that everybody would take the view that this was a meritorious but low-key issue. But that is not the case. The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), who spoke for the Opposition, immediately decided that this was privatisation. The red flag was raised and she charged into an extraordinary mode of opposition to the proposal.

Mr. Foulkes: I must spring to the defence of my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles. She may not be a noble Lady, but she is correct, impressive and powerful. On this occasion she is right, and it was not she who first said

that it was privatisation; it was the Overseas Development Administration. That was said in ODA press releases and it has been said by the Minister. The hon. Gentleman must not attribute that comment only to my hon. Friend, who expertly exposed what the privatisation means in practice.

Mr. Arnold: The hon. Gentleman makes my point. Immediately this was labelled as privatisation, the red flag was hoisted and hostility was the order of the day. It is immensely revealing about this wonderful, glossy, new, Blair Labour party that one has merely to mention the word "privatisation" and Labour Members go ape.

Miss Lestor: I go what? I do not understand what I went.

Mr. Arnold: I think that it is called estuary English. As I say, the Opposition go ape and there is the usual hostile tirade against anything that is dubbed privatisation. That is highly unconstructive when debating the future of one of our great expert organisations. The reasonable tones of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who spoke on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, were delivered in the usual honeyed way. The hon. and learned Gentleman ended by saying that his party would oppose the Government. That is about par for the course for Liberal Democrats, who have not looked properly at the facts of this privatisation.

Privatisation is not a simplistic monolithic approach. All privatisations are different and could be categorised. Many of them are straight privatisations of independent companies which many Conservative Members would say should perhaps never have been privatised. Companies such as British Airways, British Steel, the bus companies, Amersham International and British Petroleum were all separate companies in the same way as Crown Agents.

Those of us who were in business used to travel frequently with British Airways when it was nationalised. We did that out of loyalty to the flag which was stuck on the aircraft, but there was a certain amount of embarrassment about the standard of service provided. When BA had the freedom, the scope and the competition of the marketplace and was unable to put its hands in the taxpayers' pockets it turned itself into the world's favourite airline. The same is true of British Steel in terms of quality. I could go through the gamut, but I fear that I am starting to make you restless, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I shall deal with privatisations that contrast with the one that we are debating. The House gets steamed up about the utilities, but there is also privatisation by means of franchise. The train operating companies were privatised in that way, and by no stretch of the imagination are they comparable with Crown Agents. We are debating a privatisation—let us be proud of the phrase, Conservatives certainly are—that is a transfer to an independent foundation. It will bring together many interested organisations and bodies, non-governmental and international organisations and a variety of institutions which will participate to oversee and ensure that the excellence of what Crown Agents offers is expanded, extended and developed in a way that could never happen under direct Government control.

The world is developing fast, and flexibility is essential if one is to succeed in delivering a wide-ranging service in the way that Crown Agents has always done. We should never underestimate the fact that Britain is a great international player. It is a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations, one of the great powers of the European Union and a leading nation in the Commonwealth and in the G7. I could continue with the list of our contributions.

In debating the subject of Crown Agents, we are also considering some of the outstanding work throughout the world that is carried out by some of our non-governmental organisations. They have a proud record of service, especially in the third world where many of them work with Crown Agents. Those organisations serve well not because they have been born and bred of Government but because they are independent. Many organisations based in the United Kingdom do exceptionally good international work. By supporting the Bill, we shall take a great organisation with a great history which embodies the expertise for which Britain is world renowned and place it alongside the NGOs. They will work with Crown Agents, which will build on the past and develop in the future in a way of which the House can be proud.

7.47 pm

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I had not planned to speak in the debate and I apologise to the Minister and to my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) for missing their speeches. I was at a meeting of the Standing Committee which is examining the Pensions Bill. However, listening to the debate has prompted me to intervene and I shall start by declaring an interest. Last year I went to Japan for a series of meetings with officials in the Japanese Foreign Ministry. I was a guest of the Japanese Government who paid my fare and my accommodation. I shall speak later about the Japanese overseas aid programme.

The Minister confirmed in clear terms to my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) that the Bill proposes to privatise the Crown Agents. As a supporter of the new Labour agenda of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), I do not take the crude view that everything in the public sector is necessarily good or that private sector provision is necessarily bad. I take a pragmatic view, and the pragmatic question about the Bill is whether the privatisation of Crown Agents will make it more efficient or more effective.

Crown Agents is held in high public regard in this country and abroad. That is reflected in the size of its portfolio—the number of countries that come to it for its services. It is one of the oldest institutions in the British public service. It is far older than the Overseas Development Administration and it is older than most of the Departments of State which have Ministers who report to the House.

There has been some sentimentality, especially from Conservative Members, about Crown Agents. Until this debate, I had not realised that being a schoolboy stamp collector was an essential requirement for a Conservative candidate.

Mr. Baldry *indicated assent.*

Mr. Timothy Wood (Lord Commissioner to the Treasury) *indicated assent.*

Mr. Bayley: I see the Minister and the Government Whip nodding their heads. I did not realise that the first question at a Conservative selection conference was, "What colour was the 4 cent stamp for the West Indies

[Mr. Bayley]

Federation and when did the West Indies Federation cease to exist?" I now realise why the Conservative party gets the candidates that it does. Sadly, future generations of Conservative Members will not search in their watermark trays for Crown watermarks on the back of their stamps, but for Foundation plc watermarks. Sentimentality may be a fine thing and Crown Agents is a fine thing, but sentimentality in itself is not a good reason for not privatising Crown Agents.

We need to consider whether privatisation will make Crown Agents more efficient, more effective and more accountable to the people who go to it for its services. It would be possible for the Government to make the case that that would happen, but they have not done so to date. The reason that they have failed to do so is that they have set out in the Bill the framework, but not the detail about how the private Crown Agents will operate.

Without that detail, I am not prepared to take a gamble that the high ethical standards, the social commitment and the commitment to development which have characterised Crown Agents since it became a public corporation will be maintained. There are hon. Members who will seek that reassurance from the Government if they are to support the Bill. The Minister will have to say far more on Second Reading and in Committee to win that support and to achieve the cross-party consensus which exists about many parts of the Government's overseas aid programme.

Other hon. Members have quoted from the *Financial Times* article of 26 August 1993 which commented on Baroness Chalker's letter to the Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee outlining the Government's plans for the future of Crown Agents. The *Financial Times* reported that the Japanese

"lobbied the UK government against outright privatisation, arguing that this would imperil the honest broker status of the organisation."

In evidence to the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Barry Ireton, an ODA official, said:

"I think it is fair to say the Japanese would have concerns if the Crown Agents simply became an ordinary commercial private business."

What the Japanese say matters not just because the Japanese are the second biggest customers of Crown Agents, putting hundreds of millions of pounds of business in its direction, but because Japan is an enormously important player in overseas development assistance. This year, for the first time, Japan has become the world's largest overseas aid donor—larger even than the United States. Japan may give less as a proportion of gross national product than the United Kingdom, but because its economy is hugely larger than the United Kingdom's, it gives more overseas aid.

Traditionally, Japanese overseas aid has gone to developing countries in its region of south-east Asia—to countries with which the Japanese have historically had trading or other ties. Those countries include the Asian tiger economies such as Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Malaysia which have been development success stories. They are no longer poor or under-developed countries, but developed countries with strong economies and a high standard of living for many of their citizens. There is a limit to how much overseas aid one can give to a middle-income or high-income country.

The Japanese, therefore—I applaud this—have turned to providing more aid for the benefit of poor people in poor countries. To do that, one must inevitably turn to providing aid for Africa, the poorest continent. In contrast to its historical links with countries in its region of south-east Asia, Japan historically has had little to do with Africa so it has turned to donor countries that have had a historical relationship with Africa, most notably the United Kingdom, for technical assistance and advice.

When, for example, the Japanese decided to send a contingent from their national defence force to assist Rwandan refugees in Goma—an important decision in itself because it was the first time that land forces from the Japanese national defence force had been deployed outside Japan—they went to the UK high commissioner in Nairobi for advice, which was willingly given, on the logistics and practicalities of working in such a role in Africa. Such advice does not apply only to emergency situations. The Japanese Government come to Crown Agents for advice about providing long-term development assistance in Africa. They use Crown Agents as an agent for the Japanese Government's overseas development programme in 14 sub-Saharan countries and they have put £720 million of business through its hands.

The amount of overseas assistance from Japan to Africa via Crown Agents is likely to increase because the Japanese economy is likely to grow and the priority that they give to Africa in their overseas development programme is likely to increase. The Japanese have found already that they can be helped ably by Crown Agents in terms of the expertise that they require to deliver their overseas aid objectives effectively.

The Government have, in the Bill, responded to the view expressed by the Japanese that there should not be outright privatisation of Crown Agents. They have produced instead a curious hybrid—a privatisation without teeth. It is a toothless tiger which will create a public interest, private sector development organisation. It is toothless because all the profits created by this private development organisation will be recycled to pay for further development work and no dividends will be provided for shareholders.

To date, all the Government's privatisations have been predicated on the assumption that it is the profit motive and the shareholders' insatiable desire for dividends which act as a spur to efficiency and effectiveness and which contribute to the benefit of privatisation. It is, therefore, something of a surprise that the Government now argue that privatisation can be equally effective without the incentives of the profit motive and dividends to shareholders. Why was British Gas not privatised on the basis that profits made would be reinvested for the benefit of customers and that dividends would not be paid?

Mr. Jacques Arnold: The losses.

Mr. Bayley: The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) asks about losses. In the past, the losses were always paid for by the consumers so there would be no change in that regard. The same case could be made about the privatisation of British Telecom or the electricity boards.

With their proposed privatisation of Crown Agents the Government are creating an entirely new concept and a new entity—a private sector, public interest corporation. If they believe that that can be the basis of a successful

privatisation, there are good arguments for using the same approach elsewhere. If the benefits of privatisation can be gained in that way, but with additional benefits and safeguards for the public interest and the customers, surely the principle could be applied elsewhere.

I shall now ask the Minister a few specific questions. According to the Bill, the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board will have between two and 10 members. The Library briefing for the debate suggests that representatives of charities and other development organisations, among others, could be appointed to the board. If the Government wish to reassure the public and Opposition Members that the ethical principles and the commitment to development that have underpinned the work of Crown Agents to date will be retained under the new regime, one of the most effective ways of doing so would be to ensure that people with a commitment to development rather than to profit-making would have the whip hand on the board.

If there were one token representative from one development organisation I would not be reassured, but if a substantial proportion—perhaps 20 or 30 per cent.—of board members had that commitment I should welcome the fact.

Mr. Baldry: I understand and fully accept the reason why the hon. Gentleman was not present for my opening speech, but let me put his mind at rest now. I have already said several times that the Government will not appoint the members of the foundation. I would hope that all its members will have a strong and total commitment to the development purposes and philosophy of Crown Agents.

The Bill transfers Crown Agents from its present 1979 statutory format into a company limited by guarantee that the Secretary of State will on some future occasion transfer to the foundation—also a company limited by guarantee. The members of that foundation will not be appointed by the Secretary of State. Some of the existing people at Crown Agents, together with other charitable and philosophical organisations, will come forward and say that they wish to be members of the foundation. The Government will have to look at them in the round, consider their competence and probity and decide whether to hand over the body that the Bill sets up to that foundation.

Clearly it is the intention that everyone involved with the foundation should be totally committed to the development purposes and philosophy that Crown Agents now espouses. We seek to provide the structure to enable it to do its work more successfully as we approach the 21st century.

Finally, without trespassing much further on your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to explain that if one is not careful the use of the word "privatisation" in the context of the Bill becomes a form of shorthand. Yes, the Bill will privatise Crown Agents in so far as it will take it out of the public sector, but if the hon. Gentleman had listened to my speech—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. My patience is now at an end. That was a very long intervention.

Mr. Bayley: I thank the Minister for his intervention, and I shall certainly read his speech. There is still something that confuses me, and if it was not covered in the Minister's speech I should be grateful if he would deal with it in his summation. I had understood that the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board was intended to be a sort of stalking horse for the foundation—a foundation in waiting.

Clause 11 says:

"The Board shall consist of not less than two and not more than ten members appointed by the Secretary of State".

It then makes further provision for the appointments. If I am wrong and the Minister has already explained why, I shall find out when I read his speech.

However, if there is a chance that the new foundation will grow out of the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board and its constitution and coming together is likely to be guided by that body, I shall want some reassurance from the Minister that a substantial presence on the Holding and Realisation Board will come from non-profit-making charities and non-governmental organisations with an interest in development issues.

My second question about the Holding and Realisation Board has already been raised several times in the House in recent months, and indeed over the years. It concerns the pay and other remuneration of directors of privatised organisations. There is undoubtedly widespread public concern about the escalating salaries and fees being taken by such directors. There would be public outrage if six-figure salaries of the type that have caused so much concern when paid to the directors of other privatised public organisations were paid to directors of the new foundation or its subsidiary company—a body whose raison d'etre is to assist the process of development for the benefit of poor people in poor countries.

Mr. Enright: Does not my hon. Friend consider that a good example of what he is talking about is provided by Clare Spottiswoode, who was appointed to look after the public interest and operated at a public service or civil service level?. But we now know that she is putting in for a huge rise that will take her salary well into six figures.

Mr. Bayley: My hon. Friend draws attention to just one of the examples that have given rise to genuine public concern.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I was becoming intensely frustrated by his gross slur on the integrity and probity of Crown Agents. He seems to suggest that its personnel will become corrupt and selfish in future. Will he retract any slur that he might have cast on Crown Agents?

Mr. Bayley: I was drawing a parallel not with Crown Agents but with what has happened in other public sector enterprises that have been privatised. If the hon. Lady thinks that it is a slur to refer to the fact that directors of privatised companies earn hundreds of thousands of pounds a year, perhaps if she manages to catch your eye later, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she will explain why. However, if she thinks that it would be appropriate for the directors of a privatised Crown Agents to receive six-figure salaries of the sort that have caused public concern elsewhere, perhaps she will make that case to the House instead.

I appreciate the fact that when there is a privatised body the Government will not set salary levels, but they will set levels for the interim body—the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board. On page 6 of the Bill—

Mr. Baldry: It might be helpful if I clarified the matter before the House gets into a muddle. The Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board is completely different

[Mr. Baldry]

from the organisation which the Bill is dealing with. The board was set up by the Crown Agents Act 1979 to handle the consequences of the speculative investments on its own accounts by Crown Agents in the 1970s. That was the whole reason for the legislation.

An organisation was needed which could draw a line under those losses and manage them, and that organisation is the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board which is dealt with in clause 11 of the Bill. It is totally separate from Crown Agents, and the Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board—as I said in my opening speech—will not transfer to the private sector with Crown Agents. It will do the residual work which it has to do, and as soon as it has finished that work it will be wound up by the Secretary of State. The Crown Agents Holding and Realisation Board to which the hon. Gentleman refers is history, and relates to losses made in the 1970s.

Mr. Bayley: I thank the Minister for the explanation, and I do not need to pursue that matter further.

There are two other issues which I would like to put to the Minister. First, the aims and objectives of the foundation should be set out in the memorandum and articles for the company. This is not a technical detail—it is essential to the debate. Opposition Members, and some Conservative Members, are concerned that the privatisation of Crown Agents could destroy the ethical principles of social justice and development which are the hallmark of Crown Agents. Those principles attract its customers.

We need to be reassured that the new-style Crown Agents in the private sector will not change its nature, and that it will continue to subscribe to these principles under its no-dividend, profit-recycling constitution. That will be the point upon which the opinion of many Opposition Members will turn as to whether to support the Bill or not. If the Government genuinely want to maintain the high standards of public service provided by Crown Agents, I for one would not object in principle to that being done in the private sector rather than the public sector. But because of some things which have happened following other privatisations, I fear that the commitment to public service will be undermined unless those principles are firmly guaranteed in the founding constitution of the new-style private sector Crown Agents.

Will the Government give an undertaking to publish a draft of the memorandum and articles before the Bill goes into Committee? The debate will be meaningless if it is predicated on a "what-if" assumption and if we do not have the memorandum and articles before the Committee debate starts. If the Government wish to reassure the Opposition in Committee by going through in detail how it will work in practice, they should publish the memorandum and articles. If the Government wish to obscure the real nature of a privatised Crown Agents until after the House—with the benefit of the Government majority—has passed the Bill, they will come up against suspicion and opposition from the Opposition Benches.

Mr. Baldry: It would be disingenuous of me not to respond, as I would not want the hon. Gentleman to be misinformed when he votes at the end of the debate. I made clear in my opening speech and in response to interventions that we have nothing to hi ut I do not think that it will be possible to publish th. emorandum and articles of association prior to the Bill going into Committee, for a number of reasons. Not the least of those is that we must consider whether the foundation should be a charity. Charity law at present is in a state of flux post-Barings. Hitherto, charity trustees have had an interest in placing all of their charitable funds in a secure bank because that—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hesitate to stop the Minister, as I know that he tends to make helpful interventions. However, I assume that he will be winding up the debate, and he can then answer the questions which have been put to him.

Mr. Bayley: Without treading on your toes in any way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I might say that it was thoughtful of the Minister to try to reassure me.

Some changes may be necessary to the final memorandum and articles before they are submitted to Companies House in view of what has happened to Barings and to the Barings trust. But that will not alter the substance of the memorandum and articles. I ask the Minister to publish a draft of the memorandum and articles, as that must be done if we are to have a constructive debate in Committee. If not, we will be debating the issue blindfold.

The Minister may have seen a draft which has reassured him, but he has not made such a draft available to the House. Without such a draft, the debate will be determined and dictated by the suspicions which obviously exist.

I understand that the Government are to take limited reserve powers over the foundation. They will have a golden share to prevent fundamental changes to the purpose of Crown Agents in its privatised form, but that golden share is only for a period of five years. I presume that the provision has been made because of concerns expressed by the Japanese Government and by other countries which use Crown Agents. They are seeking reassurance that the honest broker status of Crown Agents will be maintained. We need to give that reassurance for longer than five years.

Nothing is ever cast in stone for all time. If we find in five or ten years' time that the new-style Crown Agents has built up a track record and has reassured people that its commitment to development rather than to profit-making remains unchanged, the Government at the next appropriate overseas aid legislation could remove the provision and give away the golden share. But if we want to provide the reassurance which I believe is necessary for the 70 per cent. of Crown Agents' customers who come from overseas, five years is too short a period.

8.17 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I give a warm welcome to the Bill, which is in response to Crown Agents' wish for greater commercial freedom. First, I declare a constituency interest, as Crown Agents has its headquarters in Sutton. I am enormously proud of its achievements, and I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) in wishing Crown Agents well as it moves into the future.

Crown Agents is a unique organisation, whose historical background goes back 162 years. Its members were first appointed in 1833 as Crown servants acting under prerogative for the procurement of goods and services for colonial administrations. They formed the backbone of British interests overseas.

Today, a meeting at the Crown Agents' Sutton headquarters is always stimulating. It always has something new to tell. Its staff, its proudest asset, are enthusiastic, dedicated, and totally committed to their work.

When one hears of the organisation's sheer range of activities, one well understands why it is one of Britain's great ambassadors across the globe, covering 150 different countries. It employs 850 staff in 30 offices worldwide, and places annual orders worth more than £200 million for its clients. More than 70 per cent. of its income originates outside, and that percentage is growing. Tantamount to its success is that it has now paid more than £20 million in capital and interest to the Government.

As we have heard throughout this debate, the Crown Agents provides a range of services for aid agencies such as the United Nations, the World bank and the European Union, and for a number of bilateral donors, including Japan, Sweden and the Netherlands. Similar work is carried out for a large number of public sector organisations around the world. Projects range from bank training in Tashkent to humanitarian relief in Bosnia.

As we speak, with tension rising all the time in Bosnia, another aid convoy with food and medical supplies is crawling slowly over the mountains to reach such desperate towns as Banja Luka, Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica and Gorni Vakuf. The drivers are all supplied by the Crown Agents, called in by the ODA to do a job that calls for unremitting courage and determination. The ultimate result is that they are saving thousands and thousands of lives. Their lot is full of risks, driving in perilous conditions.

Paul Goodall paid the ultimate price when he was killed in a vehicle hijack in Bosnia. His colleagues, Simon King and David Court, were seriously injured, and were duly recognised in the Queen's 1994 birthday honours list. Drivers John Crosthwaite, John Ellis, Raymond Milton, Nigel Moore, David MacAdam, Bob Phillips, Tony Winton, Edward Perks and Cyril Dawes fully deserve their honours from the Queen for keeping the aid convoys going in extremely difficult circumstances.

I salute those men all the more for their modesty because, unlike the soldiers who protect them, they do not receive public acclaim. Although they are often overlooked, they are the key to the humanitarian programme's success. I therefore welcome the Prime Minister's decision last week to send troop reinforcements to secure the protection of those valuable convoys.

The House has heard many references to the Japanese Government, who have such a high regard for the Crown Agents that they have chosen to place their aid programmes in its hands. In their first pilot aid programme, they asked the Crown Agents to deliver food aid to the far eastern sector of Siberia. That package was worth £25 million and, as expected, the programme was a success.

Indeed, it was such a success that today the Crown Agents has a major office in Tokyo, which I have visited. It supervises Japan's aid programme, which is worth $590 million since 1988 and covers 40 individual grants to 14 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Philippines and Peru. The Japanese Government are now the second biggest client after the ODA.

The European Commission, through European procurement agents on behalf of the European Union, has nominated the Crown Agents, one of its members, to carry out a number of contracts across the world in countries ranging from Malawi to Bangladesh.

The Crown Agents' work is far wider than delivering assistance to the third world. The know-how fund makes full use of the Crown Agents. One project is the management and training programme in Belarus to assist the republic to change to a market-based economy.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) said, the Crown Agents is also active in the Caribbean, where it works on development in both the public and private sectors. In Asia and the Pacific, it focuses on aid, economic management and public sector development such as tax administration. I pay tribute to the rapidly growing and successful department that deals with tax administration, which is developing a vigour of its own.

The Crown Agents has been teaching countries to create self-sustaining projects such as bank training in Tashkent and Vietnam, bringing their performance up to international standards. In Africa, it provides not only support for major health and education programmes but international banking, account and foreign exchange services to Governments and central banks.

Those services are crucial to developing countries such as Malawi, which I visited last year and where I had a chance to talk to some of the Crown Agents' representatives there. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) in wishing the newly elected Government well. By bringing in an ordered democratic government, Malawi is more likely to benefit fully from the Crown Agents' work. The range of the Crown Agents' work extends to other countries such as Tanzania, where it undertook a comprehensive review of public procurement and supply of management arrangements.

Given the range of activities, we might ask why so many countries choose to turn to the Crown Agents to deliver and handle those aid programmes. The clue might lie in the fact that it delivers real value for money. Not a penny is wasted. In the 1993 annual review of the Crown Agents' activities, Mr. Peter Berry, the managing director, stated:

> "Increasingly, as aid becomes subject to a more detailed cost-benefit scrutiny than in previous cycles, we find ourselves able to demonstrate our effectiveness on several levels. Our cost-effectiveness in the actual spending of aid is self-evident. Yet we can also monitor the aid process, interfacing between donor and client to provide surety to each that their money is being well spent, and we can manage and train recipients to handle effectively and accountably the funds made available to them."

That sums up one of the qualities of the Crown Agents.

A brief resumé of the Crown Agents' wide-ranging work will help to understand why I welcome the Bill: it is vital that it should now be able to develop further. Times have moved on since the passing of the Crown Agents Act 1979, when it became a public corporation with a board appointed by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. It came into being after a turbulent history, which prompted a regulatory framework designed to give the Government tight control over its affairs.

That may have worked at the time, helping to build public confidence, but, by the same token, as the years went by and the range and scale of business done on

[Lady Olga Maitland]

behalf of other Governments and agencies increased, it became evident that the constraints were unrealistic. In short, the Crown Agents had outgrown its constitution. It needed to be set free to compete with the world in the 1990s and beyond.

The problems were first set out clearly in the annual report of as long ago as 1992 by the chairman, David Probert. My right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development recognised those problems and stated in another place that she would review the status of the Crown Agents. Her responsiveness is typical.

Given that the Crown Agents receives not a single penny from the Government in any subsidy, and the fact that Government contracts are significantly down due to changes in Britain's bilateral aid, the Crown Agents has had to compete in the international arena in order to survive. During those initial days, however, it passed through a crisis and had to lay off staff, much to its regret. Even with its hands tied behind its back due to restrictions imposed upon it, it has done extremely well.

Just imagine how the Crown Agents would prosper if it was granted total freedom from the Government's apron strings. It would be able to make major decisions fast without having to refer back to a Government Department, where red tape and bureaucracy cannot respond with the necessary sense of urgency. Even a simple decision on a proposed joint venture scheme can take weeks, even months—or, in one case, well over a year. That is not good business practice, and opportunities can be lost.

To begin with, slow progress was made in responding to the problems highlighted by the Crown Agents. The chairman, assisted by his able and energetic managing director, Peter Berry, kept up the pressure. In the 1993 annual report, they noted that their advisers, Price Waterhouse and S. G. Warburg, recommended that the ideal solution would be to transfer the business and assets to a specially formed foundation, the profits of which would not be distributed but would be retained for the development of the organisation and its services to clients. Such a structure would ensure that the Crown Agents continues to be good for development, good for the transfer of skills and good for international trade.

I have been somewhat saddened by the remarks of Opposition Members, who seem determined to retain the Crown Agents within the public sector. I totally reject that idea, which would hamper its freedom. The Opposition were asking the wrong question. The right question is why the Crown Agents should continue to be owned by the Government.

The blindness and hostility of the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) to privatisation is so well known that all she could do was rampage in and focus on other privatised industries. She drew attention to certain high-profile examples, and drew a direct parallel between them and the Crown Agents, but did not accept that it operates in a different sphere.

The hon. Lady did not say what would happen if there ever were a Labour Government. I am confident that that will not happen, but we must still ask whether she would try to claw the Crown Agents back into the state sector. If she did so, she would kill the Crown Agents stone dead. She would cramp its style in an extremely difficult and competitive world.

For the Crown Agents to prosper, the Government should be able to stand back from detailed control, but they cannot do that as long as they continue to bear ultimate financial responsibility for it. Government ownership requires the Government to take an internal interest in the affairs of the Crown Agents, or, as some would suggest, to interfere. There is no need for that.

No one is suggesting that there will be any repetition of the events that influenced the introduction of legislation in 1979. In any case, the Government would retain an interest as a customer of the Crown Agents. I therefore welcome the fact that the Government support the transfer to a foundation in principle, but that is not reflected in the Bill.

An enabling Bill simply gives the Government the means to transfer the Crown Agents to another status at a later stage. That may suit the Government when considering other forms of legislation, but this case is different. In terms of client confidence, especially of Japan, which is the second single major customer of the Crown Agents, it is necessary to include in the Bill a commitment to make the transfer into a foundation.

It is not enough just to leave that in the air and trust to hope that the Government will do as they have promised verbally. The blinds are being pulled down over exactly what will happen next during the transfer, and the final outcome will not be subject to any control.

I am concerned that, at this stage, key factors concerning the future of the Crown Agents are still to be resolved. I share the concerns expressed by the Opposition about the memorandum and articles of association. I find it disturbing that, so far, the Government have not produced their own memorandum and articles of association of the companies.

I can understand that the Government do not want to set a precedent, but the Crown Agents is a unique organisation. Its strength lies in the morale of its employees. As they are largely my constituents, I have a special interest to express on their behalf.

My hon. Friend the Minister will be aware of the staff's nervousness about their future. It is reassuring to note that there are no plans to change their pension arrangements or to announce any staff redundancies in the future. None the less, the whole structure of the employees' working environment is enormously important to them. As staff morale is the key asset of the Crown Agents, they deserve priority treatment.

It would make a great difference to the staff if my hon. Friend produced a memorandum and articles of association sooner rather than later, so that they may have a clear idea of exactly what he has in mind on their behalf. A clear statement about that today would be much appreciated.

Such a statement would also increase confidence among the many major customers of the Crown Agents. I appreciate, however, that my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development has discussed the options, and taken full account of the concerns of the Japanese Government as well as of other clients.

The constitution of the future foundation will be bound by the operational structure of the successor organisation. I understand that the Crown Agents would like a sleek, single company, limited by guarantee, which cannot distribute profits to its members. That equates with the continental not-for-profit foundations, well understood by

the Crown Agents' clients overseas. Research bodies have been transferred to the private sector in that way. It appears, however, that the Government have other ideas, which are frankly cumbersome. They have proposed an interlinked, two-company structure, which is unwieldy and unnecessary.

The Government have suggested that the holding company might have charitable status. As I understood it from my meeting with the Minister, that is still under consideration. In my view, that proposal is inappropriate. I understand that the Government are anxious to ensure that there should be no exploitation. We all share that concern. The very word "charity" means good, but charitable status is extremely restrictive, and could tie up the operational nature of the foundation in such knots and create so many complications that that could damage the potential for development of its business. From the Government's point of view, charitable status achieves the objective of external regulation of the holding company by the charity commissioners.

Matters are not helped by recent press comment in the wake of the Barings collapse, which has highlighted the duty of charitable trustees to operate their investments for the benefit of their charitable objects rather than moral considerations. In this case, charitable status, as opposed to not-for-profit status, could have a negative impact on the market position of the Crown Agents.

Clients want to be assured that the operating company is run commercially but for a social purpose, rather than geared to generating maximum profits for distribution by a charitable parent. Clients would want the Crown Agents to plough more resources into its operations, rather than make disbursements in accordance with the company's charitable objectives.

Another factor that is extremely important to the Crown Agents is capitalisation. That is crucial to the future of the Crown Agents. It affects the whole viability of the new foundation. The Government say that they are anxious that the foundation should be viable. My hon. Friend the Minister said earlier that he did not want it to be overburdened with debt. However, that must be balanced with an obligation to repay its debts to the taxpayer on a good value for money basis.

One cannot have it both ways. Either one burdens a new foundation to such a degree that it is unable to flourish, or else one gives it the lift-off so that it can really float free. Therefore, I was worried to notice that in clause 2 the Bill makes provisions for a clawback of the commencing capital debt of about £2 million plus.

Including that debt, the capital and reserves of the Crown Agents are extremely modest, totalling £15 million. That is a meagre amount when one takes into account the fact that working capital needs are increasing all the time. Reduce that sum by £2 million being called in by the Government, and one might wonder how any major company could achieve client confidence with a working capital and reserves of only £13 million. Accountants that I have spoken to tell me that it is simply not credible in a commercial world. Indeed, in my opinion, the Crown Agents would be better served by buying a lottery ticket and trying to raise capital that way. It certainly could end up with more.

Even as a layman, I was amazed, when I looked at the balance sheet, how near the bone the Crown Agents operate. No one could say that it is wallowing in a fortune of greed; quite the opposite. There is never any suggestion from its bank accounts and its balance sheet that it could be profiteering, and I doubt that it would ever be the case in future. The Crown Agents has no real estate to call upon. The headquarters in Sutton is leased. The only capital equipment could be the computers, which depreciate. The real asset is beyond price—the quality of the staff, their dedication and sheer professionalism.

It is all very well for the Treasury to try to extract every penny it can. That is its responsibility. However, that must be balanced by the fact that it is reducing severely, at a stroke, the ability of the Crown Agents to withstand a crisis.

If I may, I wish to give an example. In recent years, the Crown Agents has had to weather events such as the sudden change since 1992 in procurement volume from the Overseas Development Administration. Uncertainties have developed created by totally outside events, such as the collapse of a long-established bank such as Barings, which might affect the Crown Agents at any time.

It would be most embarrassing for the Government if they set a foundation free only to find that it then had difficulties because it had been starved at the start of much-needed resources. The foundation needs to embark on its rebirth with a robust financial base, not—to quote the Viscount of Oxfuird on Second Reading in the other place—

"born into a state of penury."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 28 February 1995; Vol. 561, c. 1432.]

Crown Agents is under-capitalised as it is. Far from the Government grabbing the £2 million, they should be topping up the capital and reserves of at least £20 million, thus strengthening the foundation and giving it the boost that it deserves. After all, faced with the future and with all the internal costs that it will have as it goes into the future, that is essential.

It is not only generous-spirited to ensure the viability of the Crown Agents; it is plain common and commercial good sense. I trust that when the Government consult independent financial advisers, they will agree with me. Indeed, if I may remind the House, my hon. Friend the Minister did say that he wanted the foundation to have a healthy rebirth.

Generally, the good news is that the scene is set for a bright future, facilitated by the Bill. When I survey the vast array of work that Crown Agents does, the good will that it engenders throughout the world, the benefits that we as a nation receive from basking in its reflected glory, its story is born of modesty, professionalism and pride. Crown Agents reflects the best of Great Britain today, and it is my proud boast that I happen to be its Member of Parliament.

8.44 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): I do not think that I shall be able to follow the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) in her stirring and heroic manner, although I agree with some of her arguments in relation to the memorandum and articles of association of the foundation, the role of the staff, the excellent work done by the staff and the role of the Treasury. I shall return to those later.

The debate has been useful. Someone said earlier that it had been a surprisingly interesting debate. It is no surprise to me that it has been interesting. For those of us who are involved, and have been for some time, in

[Mr. George Foulkes]

development, it is an important and interesting subject. It has been good that so many people have participated. Some of my colleagues have been unable to do so because of service on Select and Standing Committees, although I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for York (Mr. Bayley) for coming out for some time from the Select Committee on which he serves to participate and to make such a brilliant speech.

The debate as a whole—I know you have not been able to sit through it as I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker—has been surprisingly full of philatelists. I had not realised the high correlation between philately and interest in development, but it has emerged strongly tonight, especially among Conservative Members. The debate has also been full of world travellers. It was surprising how many hon. Members prefaced or interspersed or concluded their speeches with mention of their travels around the world, to Malawi or Sri Lanka—not all as members of the Welsh Select Committee, although it did entrance us to know that the hon. Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) had been to Barcelona as a member of the Welsh Select Committee. It has been a remarkable revelation of a debate.

I wish, on behalf of the Opposition, to reiterate what has been said on several occasions—the Leader of the House will be pleased to know that I am still on my first paragraph—from both sides of the House, and I do not mean the effusive congratulations and effusive words that were said about Baroness Chalker. She would be embarrassed if we were to go any further along those lines.

We all agree about the great value of the work—brilliantly described by the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam—undertaken by Crown Agents, and the exemplary way in which it has performed those tasks to date. I shall not disappoint the hon. Member for Worcester. It occurs to some Labour Members, and perhaps even, occasionally, to some Conservative Members, that if Crown Agents is so good, has been working so well and has done so much in so many sectors in so many countries so effectively and so brilliantly, why do we need to change it? What is the purpose of the Bill? What is it all about?

I think it was an American who said, if it ain't broke, why mend it?

Mr. Jon Owen Jones (Cardiff, Central): Fix it.

Mr. Foulkes: It was one of my honourable and erudite Welsh friends who said, if it ain't broke, why fix it? And it ain't broke. The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam said how well Crown Agents was doing, so why do we need to go through that process?

The Minister will be pleased to know that I shall be able to allow him a few minutes at the end of the debate to reply to my hon. Friend the Member for York and others. The Minister spoke earlier, at some length, but he has not convinced me. There were no arguments; there were no explanations; there were no reasons. There was dogma. There was certainly the continuation of a long diatribe that was made in the other place, but there were no real arguments and no real explanations. The Opposition hope that the Crown Agents' good work will continue long into the future, but whether that is possible remains to be seen.

Labour Members have expressed many doubts and concerns and I will express some more in a moment. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East, who spoke on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, also expressed some concerns. It comes down to one word: trust. It is a question of whether we can trust the Government with an enabling Bill on such a vital issue. I hope to prove in more detail that it is difficult to trust the Government on this important issue.

The Crown Agents has been correctly referred to today as an organisation of which Britain can be proud. I was surprised when my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) was taken to task because she said that it is an organisation that bats for Britain; it works for Britain and it looks after British interests. A Conservative Member took my hon. Friend to task and said that the Crown Agents' new-found independence will free it from having to look after British interests.

Labour Members are always accused of talking Britain down, but when my hon. Friend took the opportunity to talk Britain up, she was attacked from the other side. Would an equivalent French organisation, which had proved so successful in promoting French interests overseas, be endangered by a move into the private sector? I do not think that that would happen.

Lady Olga Maitland: If the hon. Gentleman is so keen to talk Britain up, surely he would agree that we are giving the Crown Agents and the subsequent foundation the freedom to expand the business. The hon. Gentleman is trying to cramp the Crown Agents' style, hinder its business and snuff it out. Surely that is no help to anyone.

Mr. Foulkes: I will come to that point in a moment. The hon. Lady is as vigorous in her intervention as she was in her speech. That is a constant refrain from Conservative Members, and particularly from Ministers. I do not wish to dodge the hon. Lady's question. The Government impose artificial and unnecessary limits on organisations in the public sector. When those organisations cannot achieve the targets that the Government have set, they then say that they must be privatised. There is an alternative—the Government could take away their arbitrary and unnecessary limitations.

Ministers say that the limitations are imposed by the Treasury, as though the Treasury were an ethereal body, completely separate from Government, which lays down immutable laws. That is not the case. Even the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the First Lord of the Treasury are not immovable, as the previous holder of the post of First Lord of the Treasury demonstrated. Governments can give commercial freedom to organisations without moving them from the public sector into the private sector.

Lady Olga Maitland: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, if the Crown Agents is retained within the state sector, it will give Governments the right to interfere? How do we know that Governments will not interfere in the Crown Agents' operations? We must set the Crown Agents free and enable it to make its own decisions.

Mr. Foulkes: I will return to that point in a moment. The hon. Lady suggested in her speech that, while she did not want any interference in the operations of the foundation, she wanted some kind of supervision, protection and guarantees for its staff.

It may come as some surprise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to learn that not all members of the parliamentary Labour party know about the full range of the Crown Agents' activities. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East will know that in Scotland we have the Crown Estate Commissioners and other bodies with similar names which may be confused with the Crown Agents. I believe that the organisation can be best described as a facilitator, but perhaps that is a simplistic view that underestimates the Crown Agents' role. It has worked very hard to carve out an individual role within the current legislation which the Government are seeking to alter.

The Under-Secretary of State has said—and other hon. Members have repeated it—that the Crown Agents is one of the world's largest international public sector purchasing organisations. It has orders of £400 million placed every year and the hon. Lady referred to other statistics. It is a large organisation that works for major donors, such as the European Union, the United Nations, the World bank and many individual Governments. It is a major international corporation that has built up an impeccable reputation throughout the world.

The developing world receives the Crown Agents' expertise in the form of sustainable development, institutional strengthening and disaster relief. The developed world channels aid funds through the Crown Agents, with the result that some two thirds of its business is aid funded. Both the recipients and the donors hold this uniquely British institution in the highest esteem.

We have been given examples of the Crown Agents' work, but I wish to underline the organisation's importance. It provides a wide range of humanitarian assistance. As chairman of the British Albanian group, I am particularly interested in its work in Albania. It has provided humanitarian assistance in the form of supplying and delivering emergency medical equipment for disadvantaged children.

Its work in the Caribbean has been mentioned. Following the hurricane in Jamaica, which caused so much devastation, the Crown Agents supplied roofing materials, corrugated sheeting, nails and ridge-capping, together with logistics support. In the Sudan it supplied antibiotics, bladder tanks, blankets, cutlery, cups, tents, trucks, polybags, feeding kits, fast tanks and solar lamps as part of famine relief. *[Interruption.]* I am practising for when I am a Minister after the next election. The Minister is being disparaging.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Two assumptions.

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East is absolutely correct: I have made two assumptions. One is certain and the other may be less so.

In Albania the Crown Agents has provided procurement and quality standards input to a detailed audit of a small and medium enterprise development programme. In Dominica it reviewed social security fund portfolios with a view to adjusting asset allocations and risk to meet long-term economic objectives. In Hungary it assisted in the design of an improved system for tax administration. In Namibia the Crown Agents undertook a review of the staffing structure and operations of the national development corporation and in Vietnam it enhanced the effectiveness and efficiency of the banking sector through a sustained programme of technical assistance and staff training in a joint venture with the Institute of Computer-aided Management Foundation.

Mr. Nigel Evans *rose—*

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Member for Ribble Valley rises on cue. He wonders why I am mentioning the Crown Agents' achievements, because some of them involve the private sector, such as banking. That is the kind of work that the Crown Agents has performed in its existing form in the public sector. Why do we need to change it? If it ain't broke, why fix it?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman is saying that a great wealth of experience and expertise has been built up over many years, along with a great trust in the Crown Agents. Therefore, why cannot we allow it to flourish and expand into other areas, simply building on what it has achieved rather than stifling it?

Mr. Foulkes: The range of activities that I have described does not sound like stifling. I shall go even further into the issue that the hon. Gentleman has raised. To this day, the Crown Agents has successfully diversified its operations. We heard today about its beginnings in the 19th century and its procurement functions for colonial Government.

The Minister implied that the Crown Agents has been in the public sector only for the past 15 years. It has been a public corporation for the past 15 years, but before that it was certainly part of the Government and its staff were civil servants. According to a note that I have here, having been colonial servants,

> "They continued as civil servants under the aegis of the home government as the colonial empire waxed and waned, and continued to provide services to public authorities in Commonwealth countries after independence from British colonial rule."

The staff of the Crown Agents have been in the public sector as colonial servants, home civil servants and members of a public corporation. It has diversified and persistent expansion has resulted in its currently having offices and representatives in 30 countries, as we heard tonight. That does not sound like stifling to me. It has operations in more than 130 countries. That is a long way from stifling.

Crown Agents is expanding and developing, and throughout that expansion it has never forgotten its developmental purpose and its principal role. That is important and crucial in what we are discussing today. It must never be allowed to forget its developmental purpose. The trust and responsibility that have been placed in its operations has never been subservient to commercial interests or to the interests of one particular company, sector or organisation.

The Opposition hope that Crown Agents is not forced into the commercial world with commercial pressure and increased commercialisation by a Government who are ideologically obsessed with their utopia of a free market which underlines and underpins almost everything they do.

The idea behind the Bill has been on the table for many years now. As long ago as 1984, the Minister for Overseas Development said that the Government were considering

[Mr. Foulkes]

whether the Crown Agents could carry out its business in the private sector. The ill-conceived nature of the proposal was correctly put to the Minister by the Crown Agents. Meanwhile, other privatisations continued.

We cannot go into detail about the other privatisations, but the privatisation of water has not been a wholesale success. Prices have risen and those in charge of the industry have been awarded excessive wage increases, and similarly in electricity, telecom and gas. The hon. and learned Member for Fife North-East mentioned the non-democracy of the British Gas annual general meeting.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: How can the hon. Gentleman say that the water industry has not been a success when our highly expert water companies in the private sector went to Latin America, as the hon. Gentleman knows well, and returned with $2,000 million in contracts to provide British expertise to those countries in Latin America in terms of water supply and soiled water disposal? How can he say that that is not a good example of privatisation when it is bringing British privatised expertise to the third world?

Mr. Foulkes: Exactly that could be done irrespective of whether the industry were in private or public ownership, so long as the constraints were changed. The Government have an almost Marxist view of life. They limit the power and scope of public enterprise and then say, "Look at this. They cannot do it. Is it not disgraceful? It shows the failure of public enterprise." *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Mr. Conway) must not put me off.

The Government draw attention to the failure of public enterprise to increase the almost revolutionary fervour and desire for privatisation. It does not convince or fool the Opposition.

I know that the hon. Members for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) and for Worcester considered it too much of a fantasy to suggest that because Post Office privatisation flopped the Government scrabbled around to find a figleaf to cover their embarrassment by the flop of the Post Office privatisation. The Government business managers said, "Find us something that we can say is privatisation, so that we can then say that the steam has not gone out of the privatisation programme." The Government's response was to introduce the Bill.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: The hon. Gentleman asked for an example. I shall remind him of an attempt by government to go into business, which should be the preserve of private enterprise the first majority Labour Government's charge into the groundnut scheme. The hon. Gentleman might remember that it was a Labour Government who had to pick up the tab, no doubt at the expense of hospitals, schools and pensions, for example.

Mr. Foulkes: That is a really up-to-date example. I could talk about the nationalisation of Rolls-Royce by a Tory Government. That is an example in the other direction. Some more contemporary examples might serve.

The Government were looking for a figleaf. They produced a hurriedly formulated proposal that went against the wishes of the Crown Agents. We know that the Crown Agents was against privatisation originally. It has had a gun put to its head. At the same time, its arm has been twisted. It has been told that if it does not accept the Bill, things could be worse for it. As a result, it has reluctantly accepted a foundation as a compromise solution. That response has been against the wishes of the staff, the trade unions and, most importantly, the clients of the Crown Agents.

The speed with which the Government filled up their ridiculed legislative programme resulted in the mess in which we now find ourselves. The Post Office fiasco caused the Tory party to recognise that privatisation is not the political answer to every problem that presents itself to a Government.

The hon. Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold) does not understand what new Labour means. Of course we oppose privatisation. I know that the hon. Gentleman is often in his place, but if he were in the Chamber for Question Time and debates week after week he would be aware of our opposition to the privatisation of the Post Office. We have opposed the privatisation of British Rail and now we are faced with the privatisation of the Crown Agents. Of course we are against it.

As my hon. Friend the Member for York said, we are pragmatic. It is principled pragmatism.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jacques Arnold: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foulkes: I shall give way to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East.

Mr. Campbell: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will acknowledge the success of the opposition to another privatisation. I refer to the attempt to privatise the water industry in Scotland. The volume of opposition, if I may use the term, was so considerable when a referendum was held in Strathclyde that the Government were forced to back down.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman. His intervention has ridiculed what the hon. Member for Gravesham was saying. The Government did not press ahead in Scotland with the privatisation that they thought was so wonderful in England. They took that decision because we argued the case effectively. The hon. and learned Gentleman has produced an excellent example in the form of the Strathclyde referendum, in which 97 per cent. of those who voted opposed privatisation. I think that a Liberal councillor suggested that there should be a referendum. The suggestion was accepted by the Labour-controlled Strathclyde region. There were many who said that the authority's fingers would be burned, but the referendum was extremely successful from our point of view. The Government, rightly, did not go ahead with privatisation.

Mr. Nigel Evans: The hon. Gentleman will have heard example after example of the concept of privatisation having been exported throughout the world, probably even to some of his most beloved socialist republics. Other countries have grasped and embraced privatisation because they see it as the future. Why is it that Opposition Members cannot see the benefit of the concept?

Mr. Foulkes: I used to find it somewhat paradoxical to hear the former Prime Minister, now Baroness Thatcher, say that Thatcherism had been exported to every corner

of the world. I note that the hon. Members for Sutton and Cheam and for Ribble Valley (Mr. Evans) nod in agreement. However, when we were faced with economic problems, Ministers said that they were the result of a worldwide recession. Might there not be some connection? Perhaps the worldwide recession was influenced somewhat by Thatcherism being exported throughout the world? I had better not go too far down that road. We are, of course, talking about the Crown Agents.

The use of the Crown Agents to fill a gap in the Government's failed legislative programme is disparaging to the work of the Crown Agents. We have all been in agreement today about the excellent work that it has done. Why should it be taken out of context, as a figleaf, as I said earlier, for the Government's gap in their privatisation programme?

We have heard about the similarities between the Crown Agents and the Post Office, those two great public sector corporations. This might answer the point raised by the hon. Member for Worcester. Both the Crown Agents and the Post Office seek greater freedom from Ministers—not surprisingly, incidentally—but that can and should be done with a view to retaining the nation's assets. We continually hear Conservative Members attacking the Labour party for, supposedly, as I said earlier, running down British interests, but the Crown Agents, like the Post Office and British Rail, is a national institution, which we are and should remain proud of, within the public sector.

The Crown Agents, in its annual report of 1993, stated publicly that it believes that the transfer is in the best interests of clients, aid programmes and of its employees. The Government cannot commend the work of the Crown Agents on the one hand and then on the other dictate to it that they know better when it comes to the future of the organisation. We see that an awful lot in Scotland, as some of my hon. Friends will know, where Ministers come to us and say, "We want to consult you. We want to hear your views," only to pay no attention to them, because "we know better." It is that arrogance, that paternalism, that has resulted in the Government being so low in the national opinion polls today.

The Government have told us today that the Crown Agents must meet the changing needs in its market. That has been expressed by the Crown Agents, but to a lesser degree. The needs, though, of the beneficiaries of the work of the Crown Agents have not changed. The poverty statistics for the developing world continue to make grim reading, and the Crown Agents has the responsibility for the alleviation of some of that poverty.

In 1993, the Crown Agents managed disbursement arrangements for 150 British bilateral aid agreements worldwide, with a total value of £1.8 billion. That sort of commitment cannot be utilised for party political gain or for particular commercial purposes. Nor can it, to use a Government term, be distributed by hard-nosed business men. It needs to be distributed by people with a primary—if not a unique—interest in the development of the third world.

Mr. Luff: If the hon. Gentleman is so hostile to the idea of the private sector and privatisation, what does he make of the fact that the Crown Agents makes a lot of its money out of advising foreign Governments on privatisation?

Mr. Foulkes: The hon. Gentleman misses the point. He says that we are hostile to privatisation and also to the private sector. We have not said that we are hostile to the private sector. We say that there is a role for the private sector—of course there is—but we do not necessarily see the role of distributing money to third world recipients as part of an aid programme. We do not see that that should be part of the Crown Agents' responsibility.

I must move on, because I have quite a lot more to say. I am only on page four.

The Crown Agents, in its annual report, prides itself on being independent of any commercial interest. We have to be honest and say that there has been a tendency towards corruption in areas in the private sector, in privatised industries. To impose the Government's programme on the Crown Agents unnecessarily is placing political dogma before development.

I now deal with the foundation, which I think is the key part of this whole debate today. We have had frequent explanations from the Under-Secretary of State, in his speech and in detailed and helpful long interventions, but I think that they have rather unfortunately helped to obfuscate rather than clarify exactly the position.

In addition to the strong reservations expressed by Opposition Members, many reservations have been expressed and questions asked by Conservative Members. I pay tribute to Conservative Members for that. They make their points in a more polite, perhaps less trenchant, way than my hon. Friends, but, nevertheless, the questions, the challenges and the doubts are there.

We see in this legislation that there has been squabbling within the Government. We have seen that in other areas all too frequently. The full-scale trade sale or the public share issue has, apparently, been avoided in the interim—in the interim—but we must be cautious that it cannot take place in the future. Apprehensions about the Government's long-term plans for the Crown Agents are still prevalent, certainly among Opposition Members and, I am sure, elsewhere.

No one should be fooled by the simple promise of a foundation. The first opportune moment for the Crown Agents to be exposed to what was described by Conservative Members as the full rigours of the competitive free market environment could be utilised. The failure of some future legislative measure, perhaps even rail privatisation, could require the Crown Agents to be used again for full privatisation in order to try to obtain some money for the Exchequer.

The Minister has said that the Government's plans to reform the Crown Agents were being discussed in 1984. I said that myself earlier. They have continued for more than 10 years. It took nine years to decide that there would be a foundation and that was announced in August 1993. As I said in my intervention on the Minister, for nearly two years now we have all waited patiently for the Government's social and developmental objectives to be outlined.

Our colleagues in another place have been given repeated assurances that we would be able to discuss such social objectives in this House and we are still waiting. We have been promised a foundation and we are being asked to trust the Government. However, the Government's record of broken promises does not inspire trust from this side of the House, nor do they deserve it.

[Mr. Foulkes]

We do not know what will happen after the five years. We may, in Committee, change that period. If the Secretary of State's oversight—this emerged from an intervention earlier—is necessary for the first five years, why, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) rightly asked, is it not necessary afterwards? In some ways, the further one moves from the current position the more necessary it may be.

The lack of information being made available to Parliament also increases suspicion about the Government's negotiations or wranglings with the Crown Agents and, presumably, as the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam said, the wranglings or negotiations with the Treasury for the best deal available.

In particular, the healthy state of the pension fund, a matter of particular concern to the trade unions, with a value of between £60 million and £70 million and an actuarial surplus of £19.5 million, means that beady eyes might be cast on it. Those funds have the potential to be siphoned off and used for other purposes. Those who serve on the Committee will have the important function of trying to obtain some assurances in relation to the pension fund.

In contrast to the 1979 Act, the Bill does not even mention the employment or pension rights of the staff who have been so highly praised by the Government and by Conservative Members. Surely, as I think the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam was saying, something should be written into the Bill to protect their rights. Mere bland assurances from Ministers are no longer enough. Crown Agents' staff should have written into the Bill assurances about their terms and conditions, their right to trade union membership and a guarantee that the pensions will be protected.

In the other place, the Minister described the Bill as both unusual and usual in its form. That is symptomatic of the mess that the Government are in danger of making with an organisation that has requested simple reforms to allow for change. It does not wish to lose its developmental objective. I am sure that it is as eager as the rest of us to see the Government's idea of a social objective.

The guarantee that for five years the Crown Agents will be protected is ludicrous. As I said earlier, what will happen after that? The whole operation could be changed by members of the board, and sold off in pieces along with its developmental objectives. The pension fund and the financial services branch could become prey to big-city institutions. Such a scenario could come about if guarantees are not clearly set out in the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Eccles demanded such guarantees earlier.

Opposition Members are concerned about the subversion of parliamentary scrutiny. Crown Agents has been grateful for such scrutiny in the past. In 1979—to which the Minister referred—the responsibility and power of Parliament effectively saved Crown Agents, and put it back on the right path. Parliamentary scrutiny has been important throughout its long existence.

The problems of the mid-1970s, when the pursuit of financial gain overtook Crown Agents' responsibility, were ironed out in legislation. That legislation—although it was introduced by Labour Ministers—was implemented by a Conservative Government: a Conservative Government who now seek to allow Crown Agents to move outwith the accountability of the public sector, without proper explanation. I do not think that the company will be any safer in the private sector in the 1990s than it was in the 1970s, following the climate created by BCCI, Barings—which was mentioned earlier—and all the private sector problems of the past decade.

Over the years, Parliament has become increasingly familiar with a phrase that is written into Bills—"The Secretary of State may". This Bill has taken that to extremes: the phrase appears nearly as many times as the Bill has clauses. Some of my colleagues have described the Bill as a skeleton, but I consider that an exaggeration. It does not contain even any bare bones of legislation; all that we have are a few clauses, hastily thrown together, allowing the Secretary of State to do as he pleases.

Empty promises from Ministers are no longer good enough. We demand from the Minister that the memorandum and articles of association of the company be made available to be addressed fully in Committee, as required by my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles.

The hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam asked whether the company should be a charity. I know that its employees have some anxieties about what that might actually mean. What about the membership of the foundation? We have heard question after question about how that membership should be chosen. Will it ultimately become a self-perpetuating oligarchy? Will there be any accountability, beyond the foundation, to Parliament, the courts or the charity commissioners? A degree of accountability is needed beyond the membership of a self-perpetuating board.

What powers will the Secretary of State have in relation to the foundation after the five-year or other period? We have heard what happens in the event of a profit; what happens if there is a loss? This foundation or operating company may not always create a profit. Will it go into liquidation? What will happen to its projects in that event? At present the Government are there to help, but that long stop will not be available in the private sector.

The Government's argument for reform of Crown Agents does no justice to the valuable work that it has undertaken. As I said earlier in reply to a number of interventions, the commercial freedoms that it requires could be easily achieved by simple amendments to the 1979 Act; there is no need to change the whole nature of Crown Agents itself.

The hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) spoke of extra work with local authorities. The hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) spoke of greater freedom—the acceptance of contracts from the private sector and public sector bodies other than the ODA. All that can be achieved by the granting of commercial freedom within the public sector. There is no need to privatise to achieve that.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): Will my hon. Friend comment on the fact that the Commonwealth Development Corporation is not being required to be privatised? There are many similarities in the services that the two bodies provide. Why should there be restrictions on but no privatisation of the Commonwealth Development Corporation while what is clearly the first step to privatisation of the Crown Agents is under way through the Bill?

Mr. Foulkes: My hon. Friend is right. That question was raised and the hon. Member for Broxtowe tried to answer it. He certainly did not convince me. I hope that the Minister will try to answer it, but I do not think that he will succeed, because there is no answer. The matter was raised by my hon. Friend Lord Judd in another place, by my hon. Friend the Member for Eccles and outwith the Houses of Parliament. It has not been answered adequately; the CDC is a very similar body but it is not to be privatised.

The Government have failed to prove that the reforms will result in an improvement to the service provided or even in any savings to the taxpayer. The only justification for such a measure is the obsession with privatisation as the epitome of Conservative philosophy even when no improvement can be shown.

Mr. Watson: Dogma.

Mr. Foulkes: It is dogma every time.

The Government's attitude to the Bill is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Central (Mr. Watson) rightly said, at odds with the treatment being given to the CDC.

The Minister for Overseas Development, when speaking on the Bill in another place, said that she did not wish to make the organisation the subject of party politics. That contention was admirable and one which the Labour party would support in regard to an organisation which has all-party backing. However, one cannot request such support when an organisation has been used to resolve ideological problems in the Tory party.

The Bill is going to bring in privatisation for the Crown Agents unless we introduce the necessary safeguards. *[Interruption.]* I am actually being helpful, if Conservative Members would listen for a change instead of barracking.

If the Minister was willing to come up with the safeguards that we demand—and that some Conservative Members have requested—we could consider the possibility of accepting the changes that are being proposed. We could do that as long as we had safeguards that the Crown Agents is not going to be privatised—that Lonrho or some other international corporation will not snap it up. There are no such protections written into the Bill at the moment.

The advice of the Crown Agents itself has been ignored. There has been a continual refusal to let all concerned analyse and seek to improve the foundation and to guarantee the continuing nature of the foundation. The Government refuse to entertain even a constructive dialogue about the future of the Crown Agents. Secrecy surrounds the whole Bill.

Mr. Forman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Foulkes: I was coming to the end, but I shall give way.

Mr. Forman: Before the hon. Gentleman perorates, he said that the advice of the Crown Agents has been ignored. We clashed on that point earlier. What evidence has he? It is not my impression at all.

Mr. Foulkes: It is in the 1993 annual report. There have been negotiations and, of course, the chairman and members of the board have altered their views as time has gone on. The Government may argue that they have persuaded the board that the Bill is the best course. I think that the board has accepted that the Government have a majority in the House and can legislate for whatever Conservative Members want. The board has therefore said, "Okay, let's compromise; let's have a foundation. It is better than going totally into the private sector." There has been some toing and froing. All the indications that I have suggest that even at the very top, Crown Agents was initially reluctant to change from the present situation. It was only after pressure and arm-twisting that it moved in that direction.

Mr. Forman: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that while there may have been understandable initial doubts and questions, the position in 1995 is that the senior management and the staff of the Crown Agents are enthusiastic about the change and wish it to proceed?

Mr. Foulkes: No, that is not my interpretation. Crown Agents has been given Hobson's choice and has to go along with it because it knows that there is no alternative if the Government force this measure through. Unlike some Conservative Members, I am not a dogmatist: I am reasonable. I hope that the Committee will look at ways of improving the Bill and extracting guarantees, to ensure that this foundation will be as workable as possible. That is only reasonable.

I should prefer no change at all. The Government, I believe, are moving in the wrong direction. The secrecy surrounding the Bill and the attempts to avoid parliamentary scrutiny arouse our suspicions of a Government who have to be judged on their actions. We oppose this back-door privatisation and want Government commitments, made to the House. Until we get the undertakings about the foundation that we want, we shall believe that dogma has once again triumphed over judgment. I ask my colleagues to join me in voting against the Bill in the Lobby tonight.

9.30 pm

Mr. Baldry: With the leave of the House, I shall reply to the debate.

It is always a great pleasure to debate with the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) because his wind-up speeches are always a cheering experience. Indeed, the last time he and I debated in the House he was so magnificent that our former colleague Matthew Parris felt obliged to write the next day in *The Times*:

> "I can report that he was magnificent. This tubby whirlwind, creating his own weather system, blew himself into a localised but intense hurricane, bellowed 'systematic abuse and corruption!' at the Tories, and so impressed"

friends behind him that they called for morning sittings on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays as well.

It is all great fun, but the truth is that precisely two Labour Back Benchers spoke in today's debate. It is therefore ludicrous of the hon. Gentleman to talk about a subversion of parliamentary scrutiny. The Government dedicated an entire day of prime parliamentary time to this Bill; only two Labour Back Benchers have taken part, one of whom was not here for the opening or closing speeches. I appreciate that he is serving on a Committee, but it is clear that the vast majority of Opposition Members who eventually serve on the Committee will not even have heard any of today's debate. That is why one does not take the hon. Gentleman's farrago too seriously.

[Mr. Baldry]

The first important issue before us is the question of trust. The hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) was perfectly correct to say that the House will have to decide whether it trusts the Government's good intentions in respect of the best future for Crown Agents as we move into the 21st century. I am sure that I can count on the trust of all Conservative Members, but nothing I could say—no undertakings, no guarantees, no memorandums or articles of association—would satisfy Opposition Members on the question of trust.

The reason is that the debate hinges not just on trust but on a second important element—the fact that the Labour party opposes privatisation altogether. Just because the word "privatise" appeared in the original press release on the future of Crown Agents, the Labour party decided to oppose this measure, come what may. It would be impossible, therefore, for me to convince the Labour party to support this Bill, because it is determined to oppose any legislation that turns a public sector body into a private sector one.

I think that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley misunderstood my point about the Crown Agents being a public corporation for just 15 years. For most of the 162 years of its history it has functioned, in effect, as a private organisation. The statement by the Crown Agents in 1954, which I read at some length, made that quite clear. It was only because of the financial crisis in its account activities in the mid-1970s that the 1979 legislation was introduced.

At that time, Judith Hart was Minister of State for Overseas Development, and it is quite clear from her Second Reading speech that the Government at that time deliberately intended that the constraints upon the Crown Agents should be tight and that there should be strict provisions about reserves, borrowing powers and audit arrangements. The whole purpose of the 1979 legislation was to seek to ensure that the Crown Agents never again got into the sort of pickle in which it found itself in the mid-1970s.

For a long time, we have taken the view that Crown Agents' business can be better carried out in the private sector. We believe that transfer to the private sector will strengthen its ability to meet the needs of its customers, particularly in developing countries, and will end the requirement for the Government to involve themselves in the details of Crown Agents' business. Of course, the Government will continue to have an interest as a major client, but the current Act reflects the circumstances of 1979. It is too prescriptive and too limiting. For example, it requires an affirmative order for Crown Agents to carry out own-right activities beyond those that are set out in the Act. It requires the Minister for Overseas Development to consent to what are properly business decisions for Crown Agents. Those include the formation of companies, the appointment of directors to subsidiaries and so on.

It is ludicrous that Ministers should have to get involved in such detail. But that detail was in the 1979 Act, which was brought about by circumstances that are irrelevant today. That is not the right framework for today's Crown Agents. It is right to replace the 1979 Act with a framework for the future which provides the freedoms that are available to a private sector body and which also safeguard the Crown Agents' unique role and character. The proposed foundation will do that.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley asked why we could not retain Crown Agents in the public sector and give it greater freedom. That is the wrong question, although it is of course always the question that the Labour party asks. The philosophical divide between us is that the question that we ask is: "Why should the Crown Agents continue to be owned by the Government?" The Crown Agents' main work has always been as an agent of what are now independent Governments and, increasingly, aid agencies and Governments of all parties have been careful not to intervene in that. Clearly, more and more of the Crown Agents' work will, hopefully, involve winning business from overseas Governments, multilateral agencies and other organisations.

It may have been right for the Government in 1979 to take powers to provide a framework of control for Crown Agents' activities, but it has been perfectly clear for a long time that those activities can be and will be better carried out in the private sector. We want to be able to stand back from the detailed control of Crown Agents but, of course, we cannot do that if we have to continue to bear ultimate financial responsibility. Government ownership—state ownership—requires the state to take an interest or, as some would say, to interfere.

We think that the most appropriate framework for control will be provided by a private sector foundation. That would give Crown Agents' international clients the assurances that they require, and we are confident that it would also ensure that there is no repetition of the events which influenced the 1979 legislation. We shall, of course, continue to retain an interest as a customer of Crown Agents.

Some of my colleagues have said, "Is not having Crown Agents moving into the private sector and having a foundation, with the profits of Crown Agents being reinvested for development purposes, somewhat tame?" My hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) suggested that we should consider a trade sale. A trade sale would, however, be wholly inappropriate for Crown Agents because of its particular contribution to development, which we and everyone else feel is important to retain. There is no way in which I can convince Opposition Members that we wish Crown Agents to continue its developmental role because it is clear that they are opposed to the Bill simply because it will move Crown Agents from the public to the private sector.

Mr. Foulkes: I have a simple point for the Minister. He would have a much better chance of convincing us if he produced the memorandum and articles of association so that we knew exactly what he was talking about.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman refers to the memorandum and the articles of association, and others have referred to the Coopers and Lybrand report. As I have endeavoured to explain to the House on several occasions today, we want to get this right. In all fairness, one could argue both ways on some of the issues. I have no doubt that if I had said in the House this afternoon that we had considered the issue of charitable status for Crown Agents and that we had decided against it because it would provide an extra tier of external influence and control over the foundation, some Opposition Members would have said that that proved that the Government were simply seeking to set up a foundation for five years and then to hand over Crown Agents.

A number of important issues have to be taken into account and we need to get them right. Charitable status may not be the right way forward for Crown Agents. My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland) raised some of the concerns about that which, I suspect, reflect concerns that have been expressed to her by some of the management of Crown Agents. That is a perfectly respectable and honourable thing for them to do because she is their Member of Parliament.

I assure the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley that our not having yet produced the memorandum and articles of association is not the result of our wishing to hide anything from the House or to misinform it. The reason is simply that it is important that we get this right for the future of Crown Agents and for the future of those who work with it.

I am not, of course, insensitive to the fact that, in the not too distant future, we shall take the Bill into Committee. I am not insensitive to the fact that all of us will be better prepared if more information is given to the Committee. However, as I said earlier, I will not give a guarantee that the memorandum and articles of association will be in their final form when the Bill goes into Committee. However, the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley can be assured that I will seek to ensure that the Committee is as informed as it can be so that we can have a sensible and serious debate.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that on Second Reading the important issue is the principle? The principle must be that the efficient supply and provision of goods and services is always better in the private sector than in the public sector. The difference between 1979 and now is that that principle is even better established under this Conservative Government.

Mr. Baldry: That point has been part of our debate. Conservative Members have made clear the successes that privatisation generally has brought for the United Kingdom; we have heard myriad examples.

Mr. Foulkes: The Minister was being quite helpful before that intervention. Would he consider making the draft of the memorandum and articles of association available while the Bill is in Committee? Some members of the Committee, including even one or two Opposition Members, may have useful comments about charitable status versus some other status. To have a draft in Committee would be helpful. The Minister was edging towards being helpful, and I am sure that the Whip will not mind too much if he goes the whole hog.

Mr. Baldry: I appreciate that it comes hard to the hon. Gentleman to have to acknowledge that on occasions—or rather often, or even always—Ministers seek to be helpful. As I see it, my responsibility here is to take the legislation through the House. Life is too short for us all to spend every Tuesday and Thursday morning having sterile debates about fantasies that do not exist. Obviously, I shall take such steps as I can to enable the hon. Gentleman to understand that the Bill represents a wholehearted commitment to the future of Crown Agents into the 21st century.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Now that the Minister has started to mine that rich vein of co-operation, will he consider producing the parts of the Coopers and Lybrand report that are not commercially confidential? The whole report cannot be so described; there must be passages dealing with the question of structure that are entirely germane to some of the issues raised in the debate. Surely it would assist the Committee if those parts of the report could be produced.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. and learned Gentleman made an uncharacteristically brief speech, lasting for about six minutes—

Mr. Campbell: Seven minutes.

Mr. Baldry: I apologise; it lasted seven minutes. Anyway, the hon. and learned Gentleman seems to have fixed on the Coopers and Lybrand report. However, in the context of the debate that report is pretty much history. The Government's responsibility is to bring proposals before the House, and we have made clear proposals, which I explained earlier in considerable detail. We shall have a foundation, whose members will be concerned with the development of Crown Agents, which will be responsible for the operating company, whose profits will be reinvested for the developmental objectives of the foundation.

That is perfectly straightforward and clear. Given the circumstances of Crown Agents, we seek to ensure that that great British success story continues as such.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: I shall not give way again now—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I have given way quite a lot and I shall give way again, but first I must cover some of the points raised by some of my hon. Friends and by Opposition Members.

I have been asked why we are treating Crown Agents differently from the Commonwealth Development Corporation. As my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) said, they are different organisations. The job of CDC is to act as a catalyst for private sector investment in developing countries, showing others that they can invest profitably in poorer countries. However, it has a mandate to pursue the investments that the private sector regards as being on the margins of acceptable risk, and a CDC owned by the private sector would be bound to take a different attitude to profit and risk. That would be incompatible with the development objectives that the Government want CDC to pursue.

Public sector status is also valuable to CDC in its dealings with the Governments of the countries in which it operates. The two organisations are very different, and we believe it right for CDC to remain in the public sector while, for different reasons, Crown Agents moves towards the private sector. That is not an ideological hang-up; we are simply looking at each organisation and deciding what is in the best interests of each.

The hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) asked what guarantee there was that Crown Agents' business would not fail after transfer, and what would happen if it did. Indeed, for the few Opposition Members who have taken part in it, the whole debate has been characterised by an attempt to think up the worst possible scenarios. However, Crown Agents has about 150 international clients, including the Overseas Development Administration, for

[Mr. Baldry]

which it provides a wide range of services. Transfer to the foundation will give it greater freedom to meet its clients' needs.

The House can have every confidence that the proposed foundation has a bright future. Of course there can be no Government guarantee of success. Management of the foundation will be the responsibility of its members and board, who will have been chosen for their experience and expertise. I see no reason why the foundation should not succeed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman) asked if I would set out clearly the reserve powers of the Secretary of State, but his powers will be set out clearly in the foundation's memorandum and articles of association. The reserve powers exist to provide a period during which the foundation's structure can bed down satisfactorily. Opposition Members have suggested that the Crown Agents will be up for grabs following the five-year period. That simply will not be so, as anyone who actually understands the nature of the structure under which the foundation of the Crown Agents will be established would realise.

My hon. Friend was also concerned about the control of the foundation on the operating company in respect of day-to-day commercial decisions. I made it clear that the foundation will be the shareholder in the operating company and will appoint the directors. But it will not have a role in the day-to-day decisions, which obviously will be the responsibility of the directors of the operating company. Those directors will seek to ensure that the new Crown Agents makes a proper return, as they will know that those profits will be reinvested for developmental purposes.

Moving the Crown Agents out of the public into the private sector will, as my hon. Friend said, give the Crown Agents greater freedoms. It will enjoy the same rights as other UK companies, and will be freed from the limitations imposed by the Crown Agents Act 1979. As the foundation expands, it will be able to accept business in its own right, and it will also be able to accept contracts from private sector clients, which it cannot do at present.

The Crown Agents will be able to accept contracts from public sector bodies in the UK other than the Overseas Development Administration. Health authorities and other organisations, which at present cannot use the procurement expertise of the Crown Agents, will now be able to do so. All of those matters will certainly lead to a greater turnover of the Crown Agents' business.

The Crown Agents will be able to take investment decisions that currently require ministerial consent. As my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam said, it is ludicrous that whenever the Crown Agents wants to take practically any decision, it must come to Ministers for our personal imprimatur.

For all those reasons, the Bill will give the Crown Agents considerable freedoms, powers and abilities which will be to the benefit of the Crown Agents and the work it is doing throughout the world.

The powers of the foundation—which will be set out in the memorandum and articles of association—will ensure that it can use its profits for the development of the Crown Agents' business through the operating company, which will be free to make new acquisitions for social and developmental purposes. As my hon. Friend said, there are a number of organisations which could easily find a greater synergy if they were owned by the Crown Agents.

The Bill has a firm, positive and constructive intention to put the Crown Agents in a far stronger position. The debate has been characterised by a vein of ideological disputation that the very fact that it was being moved from the public to the private sector would somehow undermine the developmental purposes of the Crown Agents.

The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) was one of only two Labour Back Benchers to take part in this debate. It is a sorry state when as many Opposition Front-Bench spokesmen take part in a debate as Back Benchers. If that is new Labour, it is a pitiful sight. The hon. Gentleman suggested that, by moving the Crown Agents into the private sector, privatisation would put profit before developmental purpose. He clearly fails to understand that the profits made by the Crown Agents will not be distributed to members but will be reinvested in the foundation's work.

The foundation will be constituted as a company limited by guarantee to preserve the essential character of the Crown Agents. As members of the foundation will not receive dividends, and there will be no unit of proprietorship to sell, the foundation will not be subject to commercial pressures from its members, which would conflict with its other objectives. Obviously, it will be expected to act in a commercial environment in a commercial way. Hopefully, the benefit of that will be that it will make profits which it can then reinvest for developmental purposes.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam expressed concern about capital structure. We are determined that the Crown Agents should start on a sound footing but there are certain consequences of the Crown Agents moving from the public to the private sector. One of those consequences is that one of its loans must be repaid because it cannot be sustained in the private sector. The fact that that loan must be repaid will be taken into account when considering the capital structure for the Crown Agents at the time of transfer.

However, it has been made clear to the House this afternoon that the Bill is not about seeking to raise large sums of money for the taxpayer; it is about trying to ensure the correct and proper structure for the Crown Agents as we approach the 21st century. Like my hon. Friend, we wish to ensure that the Crown Agents has a sound structure.

This enabling Bill ensures two steps: first, the transfer of business from the present statutory corporation to a successor company set up under the Companies Act 1989; and, secondly, the Secretary of State transferring that successor company to a new owner, the proposed foundation.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley asks about the staff. Naturally, it is important that they be reassured and I take this opportunity yet again to put on record that there will be continuity of treatment for Crown Agents' staff and their pensions. I am not sure how often I must say that.

Mr. Foulkes: How can the Minister guarantee that if it is not written into the Bill and he does not continue to

have control after five years? After five years, the Secretary of State loses control and has no power to guarantee it.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman misunderstands. I explained in opening the debate that TUPE applies to this legislation. I have explained that we have no intention of changing the relationship with trade unions and it has been made clear that the Crown Agents has no intention of making redundancies as a consequence of the Bill. I can explain that time after time but it is clear that Opposition Members are determined to try to create in the minds of those who work for the Crown Agents the fear that, by being moved from the public to the private sector, their future will somehow be jeopardised.

This is a sensible Bill, which will enable the Crown Agents to move forward into the 21st century as a continuing great British success story. It is one of the largest procurement agencies in the world. It is an organisation of which we can be rightly proud. If the House gives the Bill a Second Reading, as I am sure it will, the Crown Agents will go forward from strength to strength and make a considerable contribution to Great Britain's reputation around the world. It will also make a considerable contribution to the development policies which I believe every responsible Member of the House wants to see Britain promote.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 259.

Division No. 158] **[9.59 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth (Mole V)
Baker, Nicholas (North Dorset)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian (Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'cliff)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'shr)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A (SW Cambs)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hughes, Robert G (Harrow W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lester, Jim (Broxtowe)
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (NW Hants)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm

Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D (Bex'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. David Lightbown and
Mr. Sydney Chapman.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Ainger, Nick
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Dalis, Cynog
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge Hl)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fatchett, Derek
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford (S Antrim)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Home Robertson, John
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley North)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Sheffld, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll & Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon John (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rooker, Jeff
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Clare

Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Speller, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Trimble, David
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Joe Benton and
Mr. Robert Ainsworth.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

CROWN AGENTS BILL *[Lords][Money]*

Queen's recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Sessional Order [19 December],

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Crown Agents Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise—

(a) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Secretary of State in consequence of the Act, and

(b) the payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.

To be decided forthwith, pursuant to Order [19th December].—*[Mr. Burns.]*

Question agreed to.

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

Ordered,

That a Select Committee of eleven Members be appointed to consider the First Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Cm. 2850) so far as it relates to the rules and procedures of this House; to advise on how its recommendations relating thereto might be clarified and implemented; and to recommend specific Resolutions for decision by the House;

That the Committee shall report as soon as possible and shall in any event make an interim report not later than Friday 7th July;

That five be the Quorum of the Committee;

That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records; to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House; and to report from time to time;

That the Committee have power to appoint specialist advisers either to supply information which is not readily available or to elucidate matters of complexity within the Committee's order of reference.—*[Mr. Burns.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That the Speaker shall—

(1) at the sitting on Thursday 8th June

(a) not later than one and a half hours after their commencement, put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr. Robert Jackson relating to Disclosure of Select Committee Papers, &c.;

(b) not later than one and a half hours after the first such Motion has been made, put the Questions on the Motions in the name of Mr. Secretary Hurd relating to the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and the Russian Federation) and (Ukraine) Orders 1995; and

(2) at the sitting on Monday 12th June, not later than three hours after it has been made, put the Question on the Motion in the name of Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew relating to the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1995;

and the said Motions may be entered upon and proceeded with, though opposed, after Ten o'clock.—*[Mr. Burns.]*

Disabled RUC Officers

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Burns.]*

10.17 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): I am glad to have an opportunity to refer to some of the concerns of disabled Royal Ulster Constabulary officers. The matters to which I shall refer have been brought to my attention by the Disabled Police Officers Association, representatives of which are present here this evening.

The DPOA exists for the relief and benefit of those members of the RUC and RUC Reserve who, as a result of any subversive activity, have received "serious permanent personal injury". That definition is deliberately framed to concentrate the association's work on those really seriously injured, so that it caters for just a fraction of thousands of police officers who have been injured in the past 25 years.

At present, there are 275 members of the association, including some 40 who continue as serving RUC officers, and 15 widows. The association receives no grant aid from any Government source. It is a charity which depends entirely upon voluntary subscriptions from those in the force, as normal fund-raising is impossible because of the terrorist threat, and that threat cannot yet be regarded as having been dissipated.

Disabled police officers must provide for their future medical needs, including the extra needs generated by their disabilities. The equipment they require is not always available. Earlier this evening, Mr. Mulcolmson, the former chairman of the DPOA, told me that he had to purchase the callipers that he was wearing on his legs, as he was unable to get them through the national health service.

They have the needs that are generated from their disability. They have to maintain the living standards of themselves and their families. In trying to meet their various needs, they have recourse to state benefits, compensation claims and charity. I shall deal with each in turn.

In dealing with state benefits, I shall focus on industrial injury legislation, under which claims can be made for disablement benefit. It is especially important for officers to qualify for that benefit, because, if they do so, they can claim a reduced earnings allowance, which can be significant for them. The benefit is payable if the injury arises out of or in the course of their employment. There is no difficulty with the first requirement. Officers of the RUC, whether they are attacked on or off duty or after retirement, are attacked because they are or were RUC officers.

There is a problem with the requirement that injury arises in the course of employment. The requirement means that benefit will be allowed only if the injury occurred while the claimant was at work or on duty. That is a reasonable requirement in normal cases or circumstances, but it operates in a most unreasonable manner when applied to the circumstances that have arisen in Northern Ireland.

Terrorists in Northern Ireland do not confine their attacks to times when their victims are formally engaged in their employment. Attacks are made when the victims are off duty. Too rigid an application of the test has caused injustice. The RUC defines being on duty for regular members. It provides that they have a 24-hour responsibility, and when off duty can take a conscious decision to place themselves on duty. Reservists cannot put themselves on duty, but have to be placed on duty by a regular member.

I shall use some examples to show how the test has operated rather unfairly. I refer first to an officer I met in Lurgan. Kenny was shot on Lurgan golf course while on his way to the club house. Three terrorists, concealed in a laurel bush, opened fire on him. The first thing that Kenny knew of it was when he was hit on the face. He threw himself down and, thankfully, the other shots missed him. He could not have put himself on duty so as to qualify for benefit, because the injury occurred before he was aware of the threat. Had he seen the gunmen before he was hit, he could have been regarded as having put himself on duty.

It is crazy that an officer's right to benefit should depend on which way he is looking when attacked, especially as terrorists will concentrate on sneaking up behind RUC officers. Is it right that the state will pay benefit only if terrorists have made what they would regard as the mistake of being seen? If the terrorists, in their terms, are efficient and do their evil work without being spotted, the state disclaims any liability to pay benefit.

The requirement that a regular RUC man must see the threat before he can be awarded benefit has been applied in many cases. The representative federation has challenged the requirement by bringing a case to the social security commissioners.

The case concerned an off-duty RUC officer who was murdered at Newry. The facts given in the case were that a witness stated that he, the witness, had gone into the bar. He said that the constable came into the bar and told him that he wished to speak to him. The constable was off duty at the time. Two men entered the bar carrying guns. One of them stood at the door, and the other shot the constable several times in the back. The evidence was that the deceased shouted and tried to get out.

The three commissioners who heard the case held that there was no entitlement to benefit. They said that the claimant had failed to prove that the deceased sustained the fatal injury after he had an opportunity to put himself on duty. In other words, the fact that he had his back to the gunmen disentitled him to benefit.

Another case was brought by the federation that concerned an off-duty RUC officer who had been disabled by an under-car booby-trap bomb. The case failed. To obtain benefit, the officer would have had to know that the bomb was under his car. Such a situation is bad enough for regular members, but it can be even more unfortunate for RUC reservists, because they cannot put themselves on duty.

I met another officer, Ronnie, who was a reservist. He was in his car in uniform. His gun was strapped to his side. He was about to drive to the police station to go on duty. A booby-trap bomb was underneath his car. The bomb exploded, and he lost both his legs. He was told that there would be no disablement benefit, because he was not on duty until he arrived at the police station and had been formally tasked for his period of duty, even though he knew what duty he would be undertaking that evening.

Another reservist, David, was employed in Mackie's, in west Belfast. He was the subject of three different attacks, and was seriously injured in the third. On that occasion, he was leaving work when he noticed two men approach him in a suspicious manner. He started to run. The next thing he felt was a pain in his back. At that point, he drew his

personal protection weapon and turned, trying to cock it, but just as he was doing so, his strength failed, and he found himself standing with a half-cocked gun, staring at the two gunmen who had opened fire on him.

Thankfully, the mere sight of his pistol was enough to make both of the armed republicans run away. A tribunal, however, in 1986, disallowed his appeal: he was not on duty, nor was he doing anything connected with his duty. Being a reservist, he could not put himself on duty in the same way that a regular could.

In describing these decisions, I intend no criticism of the tribunals. They have to administer the law as the House makes it, and they do so sympathetically: if they can bring the injured officers within benefit, they do so, as they did in the case of Hazel, a reservist like her husband.

On the morning in question, Hazel left home, dropped off her baby with the child minder, and drove to her husband's daytime place of work, before going on to the school where she was a teacher. She and her husband noticed a car, because of the circumstances were suspicious of it, and noted down its number. As her husband got out, the men in the car opened fire. Her husband escaped, but she was hit three times, suffering head and back injuries.

Hazel was eventually held entitled to benefit—I say "eventually", but there was an interval of 18 years between the injury and the benefit being paid—because the act of recording the number of a suspicious vehicle was treated by the tribunal as being "reasonably incidental" to her employment, so she was treated as being on duty. It was a good result in that case, if perhaps not entirely consistent with the RUC regulations.

This is a problem primarily for police officers. It does not arise to the same extent with regard to regular soldiers or to members of the home-based units of the Royal Irish Regiment, and, before that, the Ulster Defence regiment. If any of the latter receive injuries in similar situations to those that I have described, they are entitled to a war disablement pension, which has a very generous range of additional allowances. I shall not go into detail about the allowances, but the war disablement pension is more beneficial than disablement benefit, primarily because of free drugs, no prescription charges, priority hospital treatment, and more regular reviews of condition.

There are also police ill health pensions, but they are less beneficial than the war disablement benefit, because, if a person can do some work and is in receipt of a disablement benefit, one may, if it will advance or improve one's medical condition, whereas under the police pension one cannot work.

The complaint concerning criminal injury compensation is that awards are sometimes low and can be inconsistent. The belief that awards have been inconsistent is a general belief in Northern Ireland, not only among police officers but within the professions. It is difficult to make comparisons, but I have been given some examples that indicate a degree of inconsistency. I shall use only two.

One concerns the loss of a leg. The DPOA has given details of two officers who had lost a leg. The cases were settled in successive years, 1978-79. One received £27,500 in compensation; the other, £45,000. The former, who received less, returned to the police service. The latter left to start a business. I do not know, but it might be the case that the larger figure was regarded as reflecting the uncertainty as to future income.

The other comparison—an easier one to make—involves the loss of an eye, where all three officers continued in employment. There was no question of loss of future earnings. It was purely a matter of pain and suffering and loss of amenity. The first case, settled in 1972, was awarded £11,500. The second, settled in 1975, was awarded £22,000. The third, settled in 1980, was awarded £50,000. There may have been some changes in the value of money between the three awards, but compensation is supposed to take account of that. The earlier awards, particularly the one for £11,500, will now have been seriously eroded by inflation.

Hazel, whom I mentioned earlier, was a further education lecturer, grade 1, earning £9,000 per annum when she was injured in 1976. She had injuries to the eye, both shoulders, both arms, back, right lung, liver, stomach and right kidney. She was retired on medical grounds from her college in 1978 and from the police in 1981. In 1979, she was awarded £18,500 in compensation—an incredible award, scarcely enough to cover the special damage from the time of injury to the time of the award of compensation. From that, she has to pay for prescriptions, for physiotherapy and osteopathy for pain relief. It is a derisory award. One can imagine her feelings today as she listens to regular appeals for generous provision for the resettlement of offenders.

In the Belfast *News Letter* last Wednesday, there was an interview with Phyllis, whose husband died last year, 13 years after being wounded and having had six operations in the interval. She said that her compensation was barely enough to pay off their mortgage, and was soon gone altogether. Phyllis's husband had been in receipt of benefit, but the day he died, she lost the car and more than £200 a week in benefit, and was reduced to little more than £80 a week. The article records that Phyllis

"is high in her praise of the RUC's welfare branch and the Police Dependants Trust which helps out financially."

Sam Malcolmson, a former DPOA chairman, in the same article, says:

"All members in the DPOA depend on police charities to maintain a decent standard of living. Without their help they couldn't afford the treatment needed to ease the chronic pain many suffer or the physiotherapy treatment they need."

It is a shameful state of affairs that all the members of the association—I do not doubt what Mr. Malcomson says—who have made such sacrifices for the community now find themselves dependent on charity.

In the same article, Mr. Malcolmson said that early compensation awards for injuries were an insult to people who were maimed, and, if the Government were determined to spend millions of pounds on the rehabilitation of prisoners, they should also have to care for their victims. He concluded that the Government would have to show "parity of esteem", to use the modern term.

Obviously, we hope that the present temporary ceasefire develops into a permanent peace, so that the horrific injuries inflicted on members of the security forces are not repeated. If that is the case, the matters that I have mentioned are past matters, and that complicates the solutions to them.

If we were dealing with future events, there are obvious changes. At the very least, RUC regulations could be amended so that RUC reservists are not at a disadvantage. For example, I understand that the Metropolitan police allows special constables to put themselves on duty "in a real emergency". But that would not tackle the real

[Mr. David Trimble]

problem, which is the industrial injury benefit test of "arising in the course of employment", which is simply not appropriate.

The emergency exists over and above the details of employment duties, and that emergency can approach unawares. The legislation needs to be capable of coping with the consequences of that emergency, and presently it is not.

We could change the industrial injuries legislation to reflect the facts, but if we are to go that far, would it not be better to broaden the scope of war disablement pensions? Such pensions are not limited to soldiers. As well as the UDR members, they include injuries in time of war to the home guard, the nursing and auxiliary services, civil defence workers, the naval auxiliary services, merchant seamen and coastguards. Obviously, the intention is to cover all those persons who are affected by the emergency. Including the RUC would be within the spirit of that list, and would end the invidious distinction made between the RUC and the UDR.

Alternatively, if one wants to keep the distinction and keep the names of the two pension schemes, we could ensure that there is the same standard of provision in both of them. If changes are being made, obviously they must be retrospective.

Compensation should also be considered. Technically, all the cases have been determined. People have made claims and accepted settlements. I understand that reopening settlements would be resisted, because it would set awkward precedents. But I would ask the Minister to have a quiet look at the discrepancies, and to consider what must be done.

Here, I must pay tribute to the hon. Member for East Hampshire (Mr. Mates), who the DPOA tells me was the most sympathetic of previous Northern Ireland Office Ministers on the point. Apparently, when it raised the issues with him some years ago, he said that he felt that the best thing to do was to increase the amount of money going into the Police Dependants Trust.

That could be used as a channel where, with respect to past decisions and settlements, we can leave the formal position as it is, and effectively modify those settlements by making additional grants out of something like the PDT. That could bring provision for disabled RUC officers up to the level that it should be, while, of course, putting in place a better and more coherent provision for the future, should it be needed.

10.34 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): I congratulate the hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) on securing the debate. I share his great concern for members of the Disabled Police Officers Association. I know that the hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) also takes a special interest in Royal Ulster Constabulary affairs, and has a particular interest in this important subject.

Unusually, a number of hon. Members are present, including the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) and the hon. Members for Londonderry, East (Mr. Ross), for Belfast, South (Rev. Martin Smyth) and for Antrim, South (Mr. Forsythe). I know that, with their particular concern for the RUC and those who have served in it in the past, they will take the fruits of tonight's debate back to Northern Ireland.

I have listened closely to the hon. Member for Upper Bann,, and I assure him and others that I shall consider what he has said very carefully to establish whether the situation can be improved in any way. I cannot, of course, comment on individual cases tonight, and I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would not expect me to do so—particularly on the case of Mr. Arthur Mullan, which is subject to court proceedings and is therefore sub judice.

I assure the hon. Gentleman and others that the Government are ever mindful of the many sacrifices that have been made by all members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and their families in carrying out their duties over the last 25 years. Indeed, given the many terrorist atrocities that have been perpetrated over the years, it is debatable whether anyone in Northern Ireland—police officer or civilian—has escaped unscathed.

But the House will pay tribute to the men and women of the Royal Ulster Constabulary who, together with their colleagues in the armed forces, have been in the front line in the fight against the terrorism that has plagued Northern Ireland for so long, and have borne its brunt: some 297 have been killed, and at least 7,300 have been seriously injured. Those who have so grievously suffered have not been, and will not be, forgotten.

The Government, in conjunction with the Police Authority for Northern Ireland and the Royal Ulster Constabulary, have made provision by way of pensions, compensation and rehabilitation for all officers who have been injured on duty. I note what the hon. Gentleman said about the definition of duty.

Police disability pensions, in common with such pensions paid in other fields of service and employment, are primarily based on the officer's length of service and average pensionable pay. An officer who is medically retired from the Royal Ulster Constabulary because of having sustained an injury on duty is generally entitled to ill health pension, an annual pension part of which may be commuted to a lump sum. He is also entitled to injury on duty pension, an annual pension based on average pensionable pay, the degree of disablement suffered by the officer and the officer's number of years of service.

The amount actually paid is its total, less three quarters of the total ill health pension and certain social security benefits paid in respect of the injury—for example, incapacity benefit, disablement benefit and reduced earnings allowance. He is entitled to an injury on duty lump sum, paid only to officers who have been permanently 100 per cent. disabled, and to injury gratuity, based on the officer's length of service and degree of disablement.

Pension awards are paid without delay by the Police Authority for Northern Ireland, generally within three to four days of an officer's medical discharge. Provision is made for pension increases based on movements in the cost of living. The pension arrangements are matters for national consideration, and are dealt with by the police negotiating board, which is responsible for the determination of all police pensions. A lump sum and pension are not all for which there is provision, and neither should they be all; more help is indeed available.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary has a long established occupational health unit. This unit, along with the welfare and personnel branches, has made, and continues to make,

a major contribution to the rehabilitation of officers who suffer periods of sickness or injury. Twelve trained welfare officers working with seven support staff also provide a wide range of confidential services to Royal Ulster Constabulary members, their families, widows, next of kin and pensioners.

The police dependants' trust provides substantial financial support to officers incapacitated as a result of an injury on duty, and to the dependants of officers who have died in similar circumstances. I will look further at the work of the trust to see how it is progressing, and whether it can be expanded. I agree with the hon. Member for Upper Bann that its work is very important.

There is also the Disabled Police Officers Association, some of whose members are, I believe, witnesses to this debate, which has successfully completed a programme of events, commenced in 1993, marking the 10th anniversary of its formation. Special emphasis continues to be given to encourage members of the association to participate in sporting and leisure-based activities whenever and wherever possible.

The association has full and free access to all the Royal Ulster Constabulary's resources—for example, the gymnasium facilities. The Chief Constable is the president of the association and takes a keen interest in its affairs; and, since 1990, regular meetings, involving, among others, the Royal Ulster Constabulary's welfare services, are held to review issues of interest and concern to the association and its members.

The police benevolent fund, an in-house charity, is run by the Police Association, which comprises the Police Federation, the Superintendents Association and the Association of Chief Police Officers. The fund continues, as it has done for many years, to provide assistance and support, where appropriate, to serving members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary reserve, and to pensioners, ex-members, medically discharged personnel, widows and dependants.

The fund's management committee liaises closely with local Royal Ulster Constabulary welfare committees and Police Association representatives to identify need and to provide support where assistance is shown to be required. The fund also continues to support, both financially and practically, the welfare activities of local voluntary welfare groups.

In addition, support for the northern police convalescent home, which services all northern constabularies, remains at a high level through individual membership from benevolent fund subscriptions. In 1994, 150 serving members and 22 former members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary visited the home for continued convalescence or treatment.

Protracted work on the purchase of a much-needed additional home was concluded during the year and it is hoped that the new home, in Scotland, will open its doors later this year. I hope that that will be viewed as very good news.

Separately, in each individual case, there is the question of criminal injuries compensation. Provision is made for such compensation in the Northern Ireland criminal injuries scheme which is based in statute, the Criminal Injuries (Compensation) (Northern Ireland) Orders.

In assessing the amount of compensation which may be payable under the terms of the scheme, account is taken of the additional expenditure a disabled officer is likely to incur over the rest of his or her life—a point that the hon. Gentleman touched on.

Neither I nor the hon. Member, I am certain, would presume to suggest that physical or indeed mental disability sustained while on duty, however slight, can be fully compensated for by money alone. But I trust that he and the House will recognise that, from what I have outlined tonight, the degree of assistance—financial, practical and in terms of counselling support provided for disabled officers of the Royal Ulster Constabulary—is considerable.

Of course, individual cases which are particularly tragic, through force of circumstances at the time of the disablement or those coming about in the course of retirement, will from time to time heighten awareness of just how much sacrifice has been made over the years not only by the Royal Ulster Constabulary but by all who have been in the line against unprecedented and such vicious terrorism. When that happens, it can stir emotions to the point at which, in the extreme, comparison is made between what has taken place in Northern Ireland during the past 25 years and a general state of war.

The declaration of the ceasefires, the calls for the release of "prisoners of war" or "political prisoners", seem to some to lend a boost of justification to that comparison. That, of course, is absolutely wrong. There can be no way in which the terrorist campaign, so long suffered by the people of Northern Ireland and often carried to the mainland, should be construed as a war.

There are no prisoners of war and no political prisoners in the prisons of Northern Ireland. Let there be no misunderstanding: every prisoner is there because he or she has passed through the due process of the normal criminal justice system and has been convicted in and sentenced by the courts. That statement should be clear and unambiguous.

I understand what the hon. Gentleman says about war pensions. Police pensions compare well with those that are available to members of the armed forces in similar circumstances. As the hon. Gentleman knows, police officers are well paid, and that is reflected in pension and injury benefits. The chief difference relates to taxation. Since 1939, members of the armed forces have received their income resulting from awards for injury while on service tax-free from the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Social Security. That is a unique recognition of the special status of service personnel.

Other differences relate to priority of treatment under the national health service for the disability in question and the provision of fares for hospital and similar travel. I am not aware that any Royal Ulster Constabulary officer has been seriously disadvantaged in such matters, but I am, of course, willing to look at any particular cases that come to my notice to see what device—

The motion having been made after Ten o'clock, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned accordingly at thirteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 7 June 1995

The House met at Ten o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Cycling

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

10.4 am

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the question of bicycling and the Government's policy towards it. It is a particularly apt time to do so, because National Bike Week starts on Saturday. I would like to highlight that event, and I welcome its sponsorship by Hovis. I hope that as many people as possible—both in the House and in the country—take note of an event designed to highlight bicycling and to make bicycling a more acceptable means of transport. The Cycling Public Affairs Group is holding a reception this afternoon in the House of Commons to highlight the question of bicycling to the representatives of the nation.

I bicycle around London, and while I should say that I also drive from time to time, bicycling is the quickest way of getting around London. We should realise that bicycling is no longer a fringe pursuit—if, indeed, it ever was—and I do not see myself as a fringe person. I bicycle in a suit, and I do not own a pair of lycra shorts.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Shame!

Mr. Robathan: Perhaps my hon. Friend would like to see me in a pair of lycra shorts—I hope not.

I am the chairman of the all-party cycling group because I believe that cycling is a part, but only a part, of improving the quality of life and of our urban environment. Cycling can play a part in solving the real problems with transport and traffic in this country. In the three years that I have been a Member, there has been a shift in attitudes towards transport, roads, general traffic policy and cycling. I hope this morning to help that shift of attitudes, because attitudes are the key.

From the age of 13 to 17, I bicycled to school every day. Many people did that, and it was an acceptable way of getting to school. I read in the *Leicester Mercury* on Friday one man's opinion of bicycling. He said:

"I make my personal choice—a car—as it is comfortable and keeps me dry and I don't arrive all sweating and smelly . . . I have to expend less energy too and arrive fresh at my destination without the pains I would suffer cycling . . . you keep your bike and I'll keep my car."

That is entirely up to him, and I have no grudge against car owners—indeed, I am a car user myself. But there has been a change from believing that cyclists are a bit loony towards believing that cycling is a sensible way of getting about.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): The House will be grateful to my hon. Friend for obtaining this debate, and for the positive way in which he is suggesting that we ought to promote cycling and walking as positive choices for those who have access to cars. Does my hon. Friend welcome the way in which the RAC and the AA have started to take the interests of cyclists into account, as well as representing other road users?

Mr. Robathan: I welcome my hon. Friend's point. As a member of the AA, I found it distressing that the AA seemed to think that cyclists and motorists cannot get on. Cycling is a part of transport, not a way-out activity for people in lycra shorts.

Cycling is viewed by some—such as the correspondent of the *Leicester Mercury*—as a fringe activity for the poor, but just because someone is on a bicycle does not mean that he is to be pitied because he cannot afford a car. It must be understood that cycling is an excellent and cheap way of getting around, and it is particularly suitable if one does not have a car. It is also a good way for a car owner who wishes not to use his car in order to save money. It must be got across that having a car does not mean that a person has to use it. Cycling is now coming in from the cold, but it has a long way to go.

At a reception yesterday, somebody told me that his child's school had just knocked down the bicycle sheds. Although bicycle sheds have many uses besides sheltering bicycles, it is essential that schools take the view that cycling is a sensible way for their pupils to get to school. When I was a young boy, I cycled to school. They may not have been halcyon days, but there was certainly much less traffic and less danger of being knocked down, the air was cleaner, there was much less noise, and traffic was slower, so those days had something to recommend them.

I welcome the policy statement issued by the Minister's predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), last June, which was a step in the right direction. It contained much talk of perception, which is the key. I hope that this debate will assist in changing people's perception of cycling. I also welcome the fact that a number of hon. Members are present this morning. It is a good turnout for an Adjournment debate, especially so early in the morning. It shows the rising interest in cycling in this place.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I thank my very fit and young hon. Friend for giving way. As a rather timid and exhausted cyclist, I find that London is full of mountains. What really puts me off cycling are the dangers. Is my hon. Friend aware that, every year, some 25,000 cyclists are injured on the roads and, of that number, 200 are killed? That is a considerable risk factor. Does he agree that much more effort must go into teaching other road users how to respect cyclists?

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who makes an excellent point. I shall come to the dangers of cycling in a minute. My hon. Friend is not unfit and London is not entirely full of mountains, although the Haymarket and St. James's seem mountainous as one ascends on a bicycle.

My great aunt used to live outside Hereford, which is pretty hilly. She used to cycle into Hereford—a distance of five miles each way—every day until she was well into her sixties.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I think that Lower Regent street goes uphill, whereas Haymarket goes downhill. They are one-way streets.

Mr. Robathan: I thank my hon. Friend for his geography lesson. I certainly do not go the wrong way down one-way streets.

Why should cycling be such an important part of our transport policy? The first, and perhaps most important, reason is to reduce congestion. Outside this place even now, the traffic is stopped in Parliament square, and all the way along the Embankment, cars are bumper to bumper as people try to get to work. Some 70 per cent. of journeys made in urban areas are less than five miles. Cycling is a practical way to get around, because, instead of sitting in a traffic jam, one can move as fast as the traffic in central London, or even central Leicester just outside my constituency, and arrive at one's destination relatively quickly and, hopefully, safely.

The second reason is to reduce environmental pollution, which is closely linked to congestion. Among its many other recommendations, the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution recommended that a target should be set to increase cycle use to 10 per cent. of urban journeys in the next 10 years—a fourfold increase. I welcome that ambitious start.

Lady Olga Maitland: I appreciate my hon. Friend giving way so generously. On environmental pollution, has he noticed that many cyclists in London wear face masks to protect themselves from gassy fumes? It is impossible to remove all the fumes in the city right away. Does he agree that cyclists are in danger of exposing themselves to the very fumes that they should be protected from?

Mr. Robathan: I take my hon. Friend's point entirely. It can be extremely unpleasant to breathe in the particles that have been coughed out by dirty taxis and buses, and the carbon monoxide from motor cars. However, notwithstanding what cyclists may taste, they are in a much better position than those who sit in a small box on four wheels where the air circulates less quickly. Doctors confirm that people are better off on bicycles than in cars if they want to avoid pollution.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: That is an important point. We all know that car drivers and cyclists breathe the same air. If car drivers want to exclude the fumes they generate, they should wear the same masks as cyclists.

Mr. Robathan: People should take that fact on board. Although cyclists wear masks, they are in less danger than people in cars.

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution said that it wants to reduce all urban journeys by car by 10 per cent. by the year 2020. We should all try to achieve that. Cycling can be only part of the solution. It is alleged that environmental pollution is causing a great increase in asthma. That must concern us all, especially those with young children who have asthma. Cycling can bring health benefits in that respect. We are in danger of becoming a nation of couch potatoes who watch television and sit in those boxes on four wheels getting fat eating crisps or chocolate. Cycling has a role to play in the health and fitness of the nation.

The fourth benefit of cycling is recreation. Cycling has come a long way in that respect, too. Bicycles can now be hired around Rutland Water. One can cycle around my constituency along the rolling lanes of Leicestershire on any weekend and find people cycling for recreation either on their own or with their families. An excellent scheme, SUSTRANS, which the Minister supports, aims to set up a safe, segregated cycle way all the way from Inverness to Dover—and beyond in the future. We would all wish to support that.

Following this debate, I hope to see further Government progress. I hope that the Minister will talk about a national cycling strategy. Should he be thinking of devising such a strategy, I should like to make a few suggestions.

My first suggestion is on safety, which was mentioned by hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland). The greatest deterrent to people cycling in an urban environment and to parents allowing their children to cycle to school is the danger. A young cousin of mine was killed by a lorry on Clapham common some five years ago at 7 am; my brother has been knocked off his bicycle on several occasions; and I have had many close squeezes. I was hit by a car outside my office in Westminster.

The Cycling Safety Bill, which I introduced two years ago, would have led to a charge of dangerous driving being brought against a motorist who, through his or her own fault, struck a cyclist. I commend such a legislative measure to my hon. Friend the Minister. Last year, Camden and Islington health authority issued an interesting report on lorries, which showed that, in inner London, a heavy goods vehicle is 30 times more likely to kill a cyclist than a car in relation to traffic volume. That is an amazing statistic. I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to look at the question of heavy goods vehicles in the urban environment.

Some of the best measures would be traffic restraint, segregation, traffic calming and reducing speed in the urban environment. As someone who is always late for everything and always trying to reach my destination five minutes ago, I accept that we cannot use our cars as fast as we are able where there are cyclists, pedestrians and vulnerable road users.

My second suggestion to my hon. Friend is that of security. The risk of returning to one's bicycle and finding that it is no longer there is another major deterrent to cycling. We need better facilities. This problem was noted in the policy statement by my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) last year but I urge the Minister to work towards encouraging local government to provide better facilities.

I also urge him to speak to the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, as I have twice returned to my bicycle, which was legally left in London, to find it moved because the Metropolitan Police Commissioner believes that bicycles will explode. It is possible to get Semtex down the crossbar of a bicycle—in Crossmaglen, a bicycle was found with its crossbar packed full of high explosives—but a bicycle can be effectively used as a bomb only if it is carrying a package. That is the same as with any package sitting in the street or anywhere else.

I therefore urge my hon. Friend to stop the Metropolitan Police Commissioner moving everyone's bicycles on, so that the left hand and the right hand of local government policy each knows what the other doing.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Not only do the police move bicycles; there is a problem in parking bicycles. Is my hon. Friend aware that the staff of Government buildings are hostile towards Members of

Parliament who ride bicycles, considering that it lowers the tone of the building? Does he agree that all Government Departments should have cycle bays so that visitors can arrive as well as staff? I am sure that the Minister will say something helpful, but does my hon. Friend agree that such bays are needed?

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because that is absolutely right. When I visit Government Departments, sometimes people look at me aghast, and sometimes, if I telephone in advance, they will kindly allow me to put my bicycle behind a desk. At the Department of Health, I regret to say, I was consigned down a lift with my bicycle into a back room miles from anywhere. I might just as well have walked from the House; it would have been quicker.

Mr. Bottomley: You should have done.

Mr. Robathan: Well, I thought that the bicycle was helpful at the time.

I tabled a series of questions last year to encourage Government Departments to set an example. If they talk about encouraging bicycling, they must set an example and provide space for bicycles. I am grateful to my hon. Friend.

That brings me to my next recommendation, which is that we should have more user-friendly employers. Parking for cyclists is important, but—as was recognised in a policy statement in June 1994—so are showers. If one has bicycled five or six miles into work, one may have worked up a slight amount of perspiration—if my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam will excuse me.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): She merely glows.

Mr. Robathan: Indeed, she merely glows.

Mr. MacShane: All the time.

Mr. Robathan: However, it is important that there is the facility for employees to wash and get changed when they reach work. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will go further to encourage such facilities.

My fourth argument relates to a subject that I have mentioned. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will discuss with the Department for Education encouraging children to bicycle to school, as they did once. It is ludicrous that, at 8.30 or 9 o'clock in the morning, our roads are jammed with people driving one or two miles, taking their children to school. I know that there is another safety factor, regrettable as it may be, concerning the possibility of children being abducted, but, statistically, that is very much more in people's perception than it is in reality. If more children bicycled, there would be a much smaller chance of their being abducted, and they would be safer on the roads.

Bike sheds, schools' attitudes and local education authorities' attitudes are important, but so are the mobility, independence and health of a child. Too many children are becoming dependent on being driven to school. That is surely not the way to develop independent and healthy minds.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): Encouraging schoolchildren to cycle to school is the key, because it is at that stage in life that one gets into the habit of cycling, if one is ever going to. An all-party study in Taunton Deane in my constituency brought up the issues of safety on the roads. Abduction was mentioned, and other factors. At a time when traffic is becoming more and more congested, my hon. Friend makes a vital argument.

Mr. Robathan: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support, because I think that is a way in which we can make a real difference by means of Government policy, not any great legislation.

Mentioning children and bicycling and the health of children leads me to my further recommendation. I understand—I hope that the Minister will discuss this—that a physical activity task force is being set up. Bicycling can play a major part in health. It is aerobic, therapeutic and non-polluting. We must make strides to encourage people to consider cycling as a sensible, good way of taking exercise—something which I know my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health would encourage.

Mr. Heald: I do not think that my hon. Friend has discussed the leisure aspects of bicycling.

Mr. Robathan *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Heald: Well, I wanted to ask my hon. Friend about a specific matter. In many parts of the country now, there are cycle routes, such as at Grafham water and Rutland water. In Sussex, there is a cycleway between Polegate and Hailsham, which is being expanded. Does my hon. Friend envisage a role for the Millenium Commission in providing funding to organisations that want to set up routes of that type, and does he feel that that might improve the leisure aspect of bicycling?

Mr. Robathan: That is an excellent idea, which I hope the Millennium Commission will consider carefully. As recently as last week, in the recess before rushing back for the debate last Wednesday, I walked along something called the Tarka trail in west Devon, which is, similarly, set up on an old railway line—I would rather that it was still a railway line, to be honest—where people walk and bicycle and hire bicycles. That is a growing leisure activity.

Finally, I recommend to the Minister that targets be introduced. I suggest that the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution is being over-ambitious. I recommend that we consider doubling the number of cycle journeys in the next 10 years by involving local authorities, which are the local transport managers, and applying Government policy seriously.

All those recommendations help to change attitudes. Cyclists continue to be deprived. I read continually, in my local *Leicester Mercury*, of people saying, "I saw a cyclist on the pavement, and he nearly knocked me down." I have, as a boy of about 16, hit a pedestrian when the pedestrian ran out into the street at school, chasing another boy. Let me assure the House that the pedestrian was fine, although he was half my size. I bounced heavily on the ground, ruined my suit and received several big grazes. Any cyclist has similar tales to tell.

I decry those cyclists who break the law by not using lights, by bicycling on the pavements and so on. They may feel that they have good reason, but I do not accept it. Of course it is wrong to break the law, but that does not invalidate the need for more bicycling. We must change the perception against bicycling.

[Mr. Robathan]

Two years ago, when I made my cycling safety speech, an hon. Friend said—albeit in jest—"I would get all cyclists off the road." I am afraid that that is an underlying feeling among many motorists who are held up by a couple of cyclists. They think, "Why are those two riding two abreast? Get them out of the road." We must change that perception, so that bicycling is accepted as the best way, in the urban environment, to go swiftly for two or three miles.

As well as hitting the targets, we need further joint action by the Minister, with the Department for Education, the Department of Employment—for employer-friendly attitudes—the Department of Health and the Department of the Environment. We may even need further joint action with the Lord Chancellor's Department, because I notice that Sir Richard Scott is a bit of a cyclist, to introduce a topical note; with the Department of Trade and Industry, where Howard Davies of the Confederation of British Industry is a bit of a cyclist; and with the Cabinet Office, because Sir Robin Butler is also a bit of a cyclist.

Mr. Heald: And the House of Lords—Lord Tebbit.

Mr. Robathan: Indeed, in the House of Lords; Lord Tebbit has made some very apt comments about bicycles.

In Denmark, nine times more cycle journeys are made, and it is 10 times safer to bicycle, than in this country. More cycling will make for cleaner, clearer roads, and it will mean that motorists are used to cyclists and their attention is gained by cyclists, so that they do not come round a corner and not expect to see one. If there is more cycling, it will become safer. It will become self-fulfilling.

I call for no legislation, except perhaps introducing a cyclists safety measure, such as I have suggested, in the next Road Traffic Act. I look forward to my hon. Friend the Minister's reply.

I recently noticed my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary walking to his office in Marsham street. I note that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has recently taken to walking to Parliament for Prime Minister's questions. That is common sense and should not be remarked on, because it is quicker than taking a car.

Cycling is only part of the process. At the moment, traffic jams Parliament square. I look forward to Parliament square being semi-pedestrianised, when there are few cars, cleaner buses, perhaps horses, a lot of pedestrians—

Lady Olga Maitland: Horses?

Mr. Robathan: Indeed; horses are very clean, and an attractive means of transport. There will also be more cyclists. I believe that that will happen in about 20 years; the sooner the better, because the quality of life of the nation will be improved if there is more cycling.

10.28 am

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): I am grateful to be able to support the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), not only in the Chamber, but as vice-chairman of the all-party cycling group.

This is an all-party occasion up to a point, and if I bring other matters into the debate, I am sure that no parliamentarians will blame me for doing so. Although there has been plenty of support for cycling from Conservative Members, the Government have done certain things, and they might do certain things that might make things rather better.

My contribution could be described as a little more plebian than that of the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), whose remarks I support. I have been cycling in London continually for 50 years. I have had the privilege of being able to cycle to work in London for the past 40 years—for probably 80 to 90 per cent. of my journeys.

I decided to reveal today that, for the past 25 years, as a Member of the House I have cycled not much less than 100,000 miles, most of which have been in London, with a proportion in rural areas in the holidays. I try to match precept with practice, and the practical with the legal. The work of organisations such as the Cyclists Touring Club, of which I have been a member for many years, the Youth Hostels Association and the London Cycling Campaign, which has official support, has been helpful.

As I was travelling in this morning, I took a count—in the course of about five miles, I saw 55 cyclists awheel, apart from several hundred cycles at the side of the road. Cycling is an increasingly important mode of transport in the capital, even on a dull day. I am not convinced by some of the statistics that suggest that there has been a reduction in cycling nationally. In London, particularly in the past 10 or 12 years, the numbers awheel seem to have been increasing.

Mr. Steen: I think that the hon. Gentleman's work for cycling should be recognised by the House. As long as I have been a cyclist—20 years—the hon. Gentleman has always been on two wheels, whatever the weather, and has made a great contribution to the cycling debate.

Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the number of cyclists coming into London alone has reached about 130,000 a day? In view of that, does he not believe that a much more serious contribution should be made by the Government to provide for those 130,000 cyclists who come in and out of the capital?

Mr. Spearing: The hon. Gentleman is right, but cyclists do not just come in and out of London: they travel around it. Short journeys by bicycle can easily be undertaken, even in central London, if certain routes are used. The subject should be taken up by the boroughs. I am glad to see that one inter-borough organisation, the Association of London Government, has been established. It may be able to get the London cycle network going faster.

Road surfaces in London are dangerous; the number of holes is distinctly unpleasant. That safety problem should be looked at as a priority. I also commend some of the individual initiatives that have been taken. There is talk of advanced stop lines for cyclists. One of the hazardous places for cyclists is when they turn left at crossroads—where vehicles and cyclists turn left together. We do not necessarily need to change the lights or make expensive electrical changes, but we could try pushing the white stop line back a few feet and ensuring that there is an advanced stop line for cyclists on the near side.

There is an active cycling policy, with a full-time cycling officer, in the borough of Newham. With me, Friends of the Earth have undertaken pioneering rides. The Department of Transport was asked to send a

representative along one day. He emerged from a car with a portable cycle, and promptly skidded and fell on the A13. It turned out that the borough was not directly responsible for the maintenance and road sweeping of the A13; the borough was paid to sweep the road twice a year by the Department of Transport. The Department's official suffered from his own departmental policy.

Lady Olga Maitland: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Spearing: If the hon. Lady will forgive me, I will not give way, as many people wish to speak and the hon. Lady has already contributed. I must press on.

Lady Olga Maitland *rose—*

Mr. Spearing: I shall give way for the last time.

Lady Olga Maitland: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way, because I know that time is precious. He has made an important point about the difficulties faced by cyclists turning left. Does he agree that further studies should also be made into the problems involved in cyclists approaching junctions, roundabouts and crossroads, as three quarters of all accidents happen at those very places?

Mr. Spearing: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for endorsing precisely what I was saying.

I shall now hasten on to a less pleasing subject, to which the Opposition and the Government may take slightly different approaches: precept and practice. Earlier in the week, I became aware that, if someone wished to leave a bicycle in Whitehall outside any Government office, he would encounter notices stating that the bicycle would be taken away. That matter was given some publicity.

I hope that Westminster city council or the Government will ensure that visitors to this place—those who may not officially be present in the Chamber—who wish to come by cycle can, with relative ease, find a place to leave their bicycle. Perhaps there could be signposts showing the places for leaving bicycles instead of the prohibitive signs.

Cyclists should be able to leave their bicycle and walk the last 100 yards, perhaps under supervision. It is an anomaly that we should be discussing this important topic for an hour and a half, but that, if someone wants to come to the debate, he or she is virtually prohibited from leaving their cycle outside. I am glad to see that the Minister for Transport in London takes that point.

An even bigger anomaly is the Government's failure to provide adequate facilities for taking cycles on trains. I do not think that cycles, particularly modern ones, are much heavier than a normal suitcase, and they cannot add to the cost of train travel. The right hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), whose selection to contest the seat was not entirely unconnected with his cycling activities—the previous occupant of that seat also indulged in that mode of transport—

Mr. MacShane: Name him.

Mr. Spearing: The seat disappeared through boundary changes.

In co-operation with the Cyclists Touring Club, the right hon. Member for Ealing, Acton introduced a wonderful arrangement on British Rail, whereby virtually any train on any day could take a cycle if there was room. In those days, the luggage compartments were larger than they are now. Network SouthEast still continues with that policy, except in the rush hour. It is a useful policy, but elsewhere things are getting worse. Matters are even worse as a result of the recent policies of Her Majesty's Government in respect of different parts of the railway network.

Different routes have different rules and different times, most of which are ridiculous. Cross-country trains, which were designed by British Rail, can officially carry just one bicycle on a first come, first served basis. Passengers do not take their bicycles, because they know that someone further up the line may have placed a bicycle on the train already. That is a terrible disincentive, particularly for those in rural areas, to use trains and bicycles—the combination of which is an economical form of transport and a viable alternative to motoring. It is the sort of thing that I am sure those in rural Leicestershire would welcome.

Such a policy must be considered. Present legislation and the regulator clearly do not require such facilities at present, so perhaps the hon. Member for Blaby, the Opposition or someone with cross-party support will introduce an appropriate private Member's Bill. I will not say that it would be successful—it might be objected to at 2.30 pm one Friday—but, as A. P. Herbert found, the threat of legislation sometimes moves Governments to action before legislation is drafted and laid. I hope that I am being sufficiently constructive and not too controversial.

The subject involves more than simply the trains themselves; we must consider the terminals. One used to be able to leave a bicycle at a London terminal, go off and return later. I went to Paris on an official duty not long ago. I thought that I should get to Waterloo quickly from here, and did so in just four minutes.

When I arrived, I found that the left luggage facilities had not only been let out to a contractor and were closed at 9 pm, after the train from Paris returned, but there was a £3 charge. If one does not return before 9 pm, which I did not, the charge is £6—the cycle is removed. I understand from the London Cycling Campaign that one can leave a bicycle there and lock it up if one knows where to leave it.

Such facilities should exist, but they are not as accessible as they should be in many terminals. The fee of £3 a day for leaving a bicycle can mount up if one is taking a two-day journey, and it seems excessive to have to pay £3 to take it on the train. There should be some places, as there are at King's Cross, to leave bicycles in relative security, locked up to a Sheffield bar or a cycle rank. I commend that thought to British Rail. If more cyclists travelled by train, British Rail would collect more money, as the right hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) said when he introduced the successful scheme.

That excellent magazine *The Big Issue* addressed the question of cyclist safety recently when one of the people associated with the publication, Miss Kate De Pulford, died while riding a cycle on London roads. Its edition of 22 May pointed out the problems, to which the hon. Member for Blaby has alluded, of heavy goods vehicles, and the difficulties for cyclists who wish to turn left at intersections. The magazine stated that 60 per cent. of cycle accidents in inner London were related to those two factors.

The number of cyclists who died as a result of accidents involving cars and heavy goods vehicles were about the same—although, as the hon. Gentleman said, the ratio of cars to heavy goods vehicles is 30:1. The *British Medical Journal* of 11 June 1994 contains a paper written by Dr. Mark McCarthy, who is from the health authority mentioned by the hon. Gentleman. It points to the awkward figure of 58 per cent. for that type of accident.

[Mr. Spearing]

I am sure that all hon. Members are grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving us the opportunity to debate these matters today. I look forward to further constructive debate on the subject, and I hope that we will see common-sense, across-the-board, pro bono publico, pro-cyclist legislation and administrative action from Her Majesty's Government.

10.41 am

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I am somewhat humbled by the fact that I am surrounded by right hon. and hon. Members who are clearly much fitter than I, and much more practically dedicated to cycling. However, I suspect that my experience is likely to be more typical of that of most of the population.

As a child, I was a very keen cyclist. I found it an exhilarating form of exercise, as well as the only means of travelling swiftly over considerable distances. However, as an adult, I found myself in a situation that is the reverse of the smoker's dilemma: although I wished to continue, I virtually gave it up.

I gave up cycling, firstly, because of the risk of accident; secondly, because of the unpleasant experience of cycling amidst thick traffic, with the fumes, noise and hassle of motor cars; and, finally, because, although I was attracted to cycling, it clearly was not always the swiftest or the most convenient way of travelling moderate distances.

Nevertheless, I endorse very strongly all that has been said by my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) in introducing the debate today, and by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). We should not be too starry-eyed about the cycle replacing other means of transport. I cannot see the 15,000 commuters in my constituency of Beckenham revving up their cycles and racing into London—although I would love to see it—particularly when they are dressed in their business clothes. However, the cycle is an important mode of transport.

There is no doubt that there is public pressure to improve cycling facilities. I received a letter a few weeks ago from a constituent, Patricia Ewing, who is living temporarily in the Netherlands. She writes:

"Although this is one of the most densely populated areas of Europe, our suburban area feels far less congested than Bromley. Our quality of life is enormously enhanced by the extensive use of bicycles, made possible by excellent cycle tracks and widespread traffic-slowing mechanisms. My heart truly sinks at the thought of returning to the fume-laden scrum of cars around our local school in Bromley".

She is quite right, and she reflects the views that have been expressed to me by many people who have not lived elsewhere where more cycling facilities are available. I strongly endorse the views that Ms Ewing expresses in her letter.

I turn to the problems faced by children who ride bicycles. My children are keen to cycle. My 11-year-old daughter would dearly love to have a bicycle, and I have been put in the very difficult position of having to refuse her request, simply because I cannot risk allowing my daughter to cycle around the streets of Beckenham. I live on a main road where the traffic situation is extremely dangerous, and I must deprive my daughter of an experience that I enjoyed as a child and which she would desperately like to try. I would like to see measures introduced to make cycling safer and more readily accessible to children like my daughter.

The borough of Bromley does a great deal of work in the road safety area. Last year, it taught cycle proficiency to 2,000 children, which is more than any other London borough. Another borough instructed the second largest group, of 1,200 children, in the same period. Bromley is dedicated to heightening safety consciousness among cyclists. According to the latest figures, 122 accidents per year involve cycles. I regret that our road safety officer, Scott Pickering, has decided to emigrate to Australia, and is leaving the country on Friday. No doubt he will find that cycling is much safer in Australia, although I suspect that that is not his prime reason for moving there.

It is important to try to overcome the risk of cycle accidents in urban areas. Bromley has taken steps in this area, but I should like to see its work expand. At present, three cycle routes traverse the borough, but clearly many more are needed. They are usually arrangements that mix cycles and other traffic.

Although that is helpful, it is a second-best arrangement, as, ideally, one should have dedicated cycle routes. Bicycles and motor vehicles, particularly lorries, do not mix well on our roads, especially when lorries and cars are speeding. Although it is important to explore the use of more cycle routes, I should like to see dedicated cycle routes constructed wherever possible.

I have mentioned speed: it is extremely important for road safety generally, but particularly for cyclists, that further action be taken to control the speed of motor vehicles. Speed causes many vehicle accidents and puts cyclists and pedestrians at risk. Firm action must be taken in that area.

As has already been said, it may be possible to introduce other traffic management schemes that will help cyclists at road junctions, crossings and so on. I know of three road junctions in Bromley where separate measures are in place which give cyclists preferential and protected treatment. I would like to see those schemes extended. One set of traffic lights has a specific cycle phase, and I would like that arrangement to be made more widely available.

The borough is now looking at taking specific action to try to deal with the risk that lorries pose for cyclists. Because of their sheer size, lorries which are crammed on narrow roads must drive very close to the pavement, and they pose particular problems for cyclists. I hope that action will be taken to deal with that problem.

Some steps have been taken to allow cyclists to share routes with pedestrians. I welcome the introduction of those dedicated routes, and I think that we can make considerable progress by mixing cycles and pedestrians. However, it is an extremely sensitive issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaby talked about pavements. A dispute is presently going on in my borough as to whether certain pavements should be made available to cyclists, particularly young cyclists. Reasonable arguments are advanced on both sides. Some say that it is much safer for children to ride their bicycles on pavements than on the roads, but pedestrians—especially elderly pedestrians—believe that young cyclists pose an immediate safety risk to pedestrians.

Cyclists cannot win: if they ride on the pavement, they are accused of presenting a risk to pedestrians; if they ride on the road, they are at risk from cars and lorries.

I should like to see more studies on the mix of cycles and pedestrians. It is possible that means could be devised to enable that mix to be extended in some areas by the possibility either of cordoning off part of a pavement, if it is particularly wide, or the use of some pavements for mixed purposes—perhaps pavements that do not run alongside drives and houses. That is worth examining. Although I would not want to prejudge the result of such examination, it could provide a possible way forward.

Mr. Robathan: One of the problems with cycle lanes that cyclists identify very quickly is that people park in them. They then become worse than useless, as one has to pull out of the cycle lane into the main stream. Perhaps the Government should consider that.

Mr. Merchant: I quite agree. That is one reason why I am suggesting that we should examine the possibility of cycle lanes being included on wide pavements, or an extension of the mix to which I referred, with shared facilities, as cycle lanes on the side of roads pose a risk, particularly if the roads are busy. There is no simple solution to the problem, particularly in heavily built-up urban areas with high levels of traffic.

All those different measures are producing benefit. If they are extended, more thought is given to them and further studies are carried out, we shall find a way forward to encourage cycling by making it safer and by raising the importance of the issue in the public consciousness and taking steps to control the overwhelming priority that at present seems to be given to cars and lorries on our urban roads, which often were once quiet enough to enable cyclists to use them safely, but now regrettably are not.

10.51 am

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan), not just on achieving this morning's debate, which is of great value, but for the persistent and consistent way in which he has advanced the cause of cyclists. I know that hon. Members present on both sides of the House share that objective, and have done great work.

I was tempted to say that a funny thing happened to me on the way to the House this morning, and in a sense it did. I walked along the embankment, my usual way to work. I do not cycle, as it is a relatively short journey and I find it easier to walk, although I have cycled in the past and found the facilities as daunting as other hon. Members clearly do.

As I walked along, I saw a new RAC traffic sign saying:

"London at War until 7 January 1996".

What surprised me was not that London was at war, but that the RAC knew that the war would end on 7 January 1996. We are discussing a permanent and difficult conflict between different types of transport usage. Sadly, the cyclist is all too often squeezed between other much more powerful interests.

It is symbolic when, all too often, we see the public transport vehicle and the car, and the poor old cyclist in between. That is a symbol of precisely what has happened as the volume of traffic has increased, not just in London, but in all our major cities since the war.

There have also been several different conflicting political pressures. There was a period when transport planning was dominated by the municipal bus barons. I worked with the bus industry, and I respect the talents and achievements of those big men who dominated public transport for many years. However, their interests were primarily in trying to make the public transport system work.

Then we had a new era, and a new breed of public transport planners, who were obsessed with making the car move from A to B much faster.

In my planning and architectural days, I recall reading that monumental and extremely important seminal work, "Traffic in Towns" by Colin Buchanan. He warned what would happen if London and major cities were simply rebuilt to accommodate all the private vehicles that wished to use their streets. His report was intended to be an awful warning, but some of those who were then responsible for transport planning in our cities took it at as a blueprint of what was needed to accommodate cars in our cities—precisely what Professor Buchanan was trying to avoid. Between those two strong and powerful interests came the poor old cyclist, and to some extent the pedestrian.

The pedestrian, however, has survived better than the cyclist in the past few decades, because pedestrianisation took off in the 1960s and 1970s and to some extent the momentum has been maintained under successive Governments since. Yet the cyclist is still squeezed between public and private transport interests.

I have two quotations. The first is from John Grimshaw, the director of SUSTRANS. He said recently:

"Although the bicycle is perhaps the ideal vehicle for today's small, crowded and polluted planet, it is dangerous and unpleasant to cycle on today's heavily trafficked roads."

That is a good summary from someone who obviously knows precisely what he is talking about.

The Minister for Transport in London, who is in his place, said on 3 April in answer to the hon. Member for Blaby:

"Cycling is environmentally sound and healthy and is a thoroughly desirable form of transport, but most people do not exactly relish the prospect of challenge a 40 ft articulated lorry for priority on the road."—[*Official Report*, 3 April 1995; Vol. 257, c. 1380.]

That is exactly right.

Let us not fool ourselves that other countries all over the world suffer the same problem and have not found solutions. Some of them have. We have much to learn from Freiberg on the edge of the Black Forest, where, according to an excellent assessment of the problem by the *Glasgow Herald* recently:

"a combination of cyclepaths and new trams have swept the city centre almost free of traffic in little more than a decade."

I was recently in Amsterdam, where, outside the central station, there is a vast array of cycle racks—all safe, properly supervised and secure. Of course, as a result, the mix of effective longer-distance public transport by rail and short-distance cycle journeys is working extremely well.

We all expect London to be the crux of the problem, and it is significant that so many right hon. and hon. Members representing constituencies in and outside London are here today, and that the debate is likely to concentrate on London.

[Mr. Paul Tyler]

I raise two points about London. First, the Minister announced that the £3 million will be made available for the 1,000-mile cycle track that is intended for greater London. That sounds fine, but how much will that buy?

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): So that we can all save time, I should explain that the £3 million is not strictly for the 1,000-mile cycleway, as that is already in existence. It has been allocated to a much broader project, and is merely the money to finance the planning stage. In order that we can get on, as I am listening with great interest to the hon. Gentleman, I say now that, frankly, the eventual cost is likely to be many times more than that. I am quite well aware of that, and have made it clear that we want to fund it.

Mr. Tyler: I am grateful to the Minister, and accept what he says. I wanted to use the £3 million as a litmus test of how much was available.

According to the Minister's predecessor, the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), the current cost of a two-way 3 m wide cycle lane on one side of an average road is £400,000 per mile. That is a huge sum. Perhaps the noughts are wrong, or maybe *Hansard* got it wrong—perhaps the Minister will tell us later—but if it is really £400,000, are we putting the money in the right place?

I take the point made by the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) that, for a whole series of reasons—parking was mentioned, and conflicts with other traffic and turning will always be difficult—the cycle lane beside the main road will never be as satisfactory as the dedicated route, whether or not it is in conjunction with a pedestrian route.

Most continental cities have moved away from the cycle lane to the dedicated track. If we are talking about such huge sums—perhaps in London we are—we have to think more seriously about getting good value for money. I re-emphasise the sum of £3 million buying only 7.5 miles towards the 1,000 mile cycleway. I am only using that £3 million as a test of what can be bought for a comparatively modest sum.

Who will take the initiative and co-ordinate? There seems to be some conflict. Some London boroughs have been much more imaginative and innovative than others. Will they be allowed to get on with it and have the resources, or will they find that they are increasingly constrained by Ministry policy or funding restrictions?

The Minister recently referred to the

"power for the Secretary of State to designate a coherent network across London and to ensure co-ordinated implementation of effective measures."—[*Official Report*, 18 June 1992; Vol. 209, c. *610.*]

There is no use having such commitment without money. The Minister told the hon. Member for Lewisham, West (Mr. Dowd) that it is up to local authorities to co-ordinate implementation.

I hope that, when the Minister replies, he will say where in London he expects initiatives to originate. Who will make the push? Will it be his Department or London boroughs? Who will decide how to set initiatives in motion? We do not want initiatives always to follow new road schemes, because the prime need may be in areas where no road improvements are intended.

In other parts of the country, exceptions are much more evident than the rule. There is an exceptional situation in Wadebridge in my constituency, which is fortunate enough to be halfway along the Camel Trail between Bodmin and Padstow—an old railway line used to run right through Wadebridge.

As a result of a bypass and an enhancement scheme, Wadebridge has incorporated facilities for cyclists, but no other town in Cornwall or Devon has anything like that provision—as you, Madam Deputy Speaker, are well aware. That is true of most counties in England, Scotland and Wales. In those circumstances, we must find new mechanisms, and they must get financial backing. We are grateful for the work of the cyclists public affairs group and its identification of the need to incorporate public passenger transport provision for cyclists, which is of critical importance.

In the current year, only £6 million is being used specifically to promote cycling and cyclists' activities, which is a tiny percentage of the total transport budget. For the reasons that hon. Members in all parts of the Chamber have advanced this morning, it is extremely important to address the problem. Before the right formula and the right amount of money are found, a change of attitude must be achieved. We must not send out a signal that the Government and Parliament are only paying lip service to the need for increased resources, priority and attention. We should be determined to achieve a real change of gear.

11.3 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): One understands why the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) spoke with such feeling. His party identifies with cyclists squashed between the public sector that is the Labour party and the private sector that is the Conservative party.

Every speech in the House must have a preface in which one declares one's interests. I declare first an interest in cycling and that I am vice-president of the Cyclists Touring Club—and receive a 10 per cent. discount on bed and breakfast as a result. I also have a British-built bicycle. I used to have one that was made in eastern Europe, but the pedals fell off and the brakes did not work in wet weather. I was a founder member of the House of Commons all-party cycling club in the mid-70s, with my right hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young). I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on his skill in securing this debate.

I am a cycling addict. For 12 years, I was a 10-mile-a-day man—cycling to and from the House until it became too dangerous. Cycling in London has become dangerous. The road is like a battlefield, with every inch contested. The cyclist feels under ever-increasing pressure to be seen off the road. Constant attacks by lorries, buses and cars to see cyclists away has resulted in the new breed of the cyclist terrorist, who thinks that he owns the road. Such cyclists gesticulate, shout and kick one's car, believing that they have priority. The new cyclist terrorist believes that he has the moral high ground. In many ways, he is right.

While a free-for-all on the roads is the easiest option for public authorities, it is short-sighted and leads nowhere. If a cyclist can reach a city—and that is difficult enough by train because so few services now carry bicycles, such is

British Rails's hostility—the policy in cities should be public transport, pedestrians and cycling. There should be priorities, but there is none, which is why cyclists are on the rampage.

They used to be the most courteous and considerate road users and the least dangerous—one rarely hears of pedestrians being killed by cyclists. However, cyclists in cities are under such pressure that they cycle on pavements and through parks, and their terrorism is displayed by hostility to authority—cycling without lights at night and with no audible means of announcing their presence.

There is a huge criminal underworld in cycle theft. I had three bikes stolen near the Palace of Westminster in the past 10 years—cut from their chains. I am told that one of the most lucrative forms of theft requires only a van and a pair of cutters. One can earn £1,000 a morning cramming bicycles at £100 a piece into the back of a van.

Main roads should be cleared of parked cars. Every morning, too many cars flashing hazard lights obstruct bus, taxi and cycle lanes. I want to know what my hon. Friend the Minister will personally do about that. It is no use saying that it is enough to paint lines indicating red routes. The army of traffic wardens should concentrate on the main arterial routes in and out of London in the morning.

Although I would not impose a compulsory cycling proficiency test—more rules and regulations, which I am dead against—if cyclists are to be given more road space, they must be better behaved and more responsible. Paul Newman's book "Defensible Space" explains that human beings need so much space, and the problem on the roads today is that people have less and less space.

The cycling epidemic, and the mobility of the population, have led to environmental erosion on Dartmoor, and perhaps on Bodmin moor as well. More and more mountain bike riders are using the innermost parts of Dartmoor's wilderness. That national park authority is facing a serious problem between balancing the need to offer the park for leisure pursuits and preventing the irretrievable scarring of the landscape. My hon. Friend the Minister should consider that aspect.

As to dumping, Britain builds the best bicycles in the world, yet, with many other countries, it is giving vast sums of money through the World bank to the Chinese to build bicycles in the most modern factories at a knockdown price because of the subsidies that China enjoys, and its low labour costs. Those bicycles are then imported in bits, which means that there is no problem with tax or limit on the volume. They are subsequently assembled in this country and sold at one tenth the price of a British-built bike. We must be crazy. What other nation would fund a third world nation to undercut and reduce the profitability of its own industry?

I said that I would make a short speech, and it is rare for me to do that. I promised to complete my speech in seven minutes, and I have now been speaking for six. I have one more minute. I shall use part of that time to talk about the millenium-led bid by SUSTRANS—in other words, sustainable transport. I am told that I should declare an interest because I am the vice-president of that charity.

It is an imaginative and enterprising vision. A bid for £37 million has been made to the Millenium Fund to set up a cycle network from Plymouth to Inverness, to be completed by the year 2005 if the project is given the go-ahead. It would be possible to cycle from the west country to London. It is a good idea. West country Members could all cycle to this place. It would be possible to cycle from London to Dover, Holyhead, Glasgow or Aberdeen. We would be pedalling for the millenium. What a magnificent vision. I hope that the Government will back the idea.

Finally, we should have bells back on bicycles. This place knows about bells. Once we hear a bell, we start running. People should have bells on bicycles. There should be an audible warning when a cyclist is coming up behind someone. I hope that the Minister will respond to some of the points that I have made at such lightning speed.

11.11 am

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): I join those who have congratulated the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on obtaining the debate. I only wish that it were longer, because there is more to say. Would-be contributors to the debate may be able to make their speeches on another occasion.

I think that the Government are helping cyclists. An old friend of mine, Walter Reuther, went to the Nissan factory in Japan in 1960. He saw cars being made, but he saw also that the parking lot was full of bicycles. He said to his hosts, "You will never build an auto-economy on bicycle wages." Thanks to current Government policy, we are moving to bicycle wages in the United Kingdom. As a result, more and more people are moving to the bike.

I agree that it is important to get bikes off mountains and away from natural wildernesses, and on to our streets. I am an urban cyclist. I tuck my trousers into my socks. I do not wear one of those silly gas masks. However, cycling through the slow-motion gas chamber that is Tory London is an extremely worrying health prospect. It is extremely dangerous. I was knocked off my bike soon after becoming a Member. I was knocked down by a car opposite the St. Stephen's entrance. The driver did not stop. I understand that that is now the official practice of Conservative Members in SW postal districts.

Various policies have been advanced by hon. Members on both sides of the House. We await the Minister's reply with interest.

Mr. Steen: Then give him a chance.

Mr. MacShane: I shall give him a chance. I promise the House that I shall make the shortest speech in this debate.

In addition to the various policies that have been advanced, we need more symbolic acts that would not necessarily cost a great deal of money. First, we need to increase parking places for bicycles in London generally and here in this place. In Palace Yard, there are only six places for Members' bicycles. That provision is deplorably insufficient.

We need to instruct those engaged in all new road-building projects to incorporate either bicycle lanes or the dedicated tracks to which the hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) referred. When we visit other European countries, we see evidence that these schemes are workable if the orders are given.

[Mr. MacShane]

It would be of great symbolic importance to the nation if Ministers were to decide that there could be a car-free day. "On your bike," said Lord Tebbit to the unemployed of the nation several years ago. I suggest that we should say, "On your bike," to Ministers, thereby encouraging them to set a good example.

I was impressed by those who talked about the problem of their children going to school on bikes. Living in Pimlico, I would not dare allow my girls to go to their school on their bikes. A car-free 20 minutes at about 9 am or 3.30 pm would be a symbolic gesture that would show our commitment to reducing pollution, reducing the number of cars on the roads—I accept that cars are important—and encouraging the use of bikes.

I take the point made by the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) about importing bikes from China. The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that bicycles are quite expensive. They seem to have many gears and to incorporate much technology. It is difficult to buy a simple, boring, old-fashioned bike with only one gear and with no high technology. To equip a large family with bikes is a major cost.

There are lessons to be learned from Europe and symbolic acts that Ministers could undertake. There is much improvement that we can offer from this place. The message should be: citizens of Britain and the world unite, you have nothing to gain but your bicycle chains.

11.14 am

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): The success of the debate is plain for everyone to see. I add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on ensuring that it took place. Our Wednesday morning sittings are currently up for review; they may not continue in their present form. Many Members have been squeezed out of this debate because of lack of time. They wanted to contribute to it. Let us ensure that these morning debates continue. I am sorry that so little time is left when so many Members want to speak.

We have the opportunity now to draw attention to the Hovis National Bike Week, which will start next week. Let us highlight that and ensure through this debate that everyone throughout the country is involved in the debate about cycling, not necessarily by talking about cycling but by doing something about it. Perhaps we can set an example here and ensure that it is taken up throughout the country. In that way, we would make some real progress. By adopting that approach, we could ensure that the perseverance of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and other hon. Members on both sides of the House, who cycle frequently, achieves results.

I put on record our thanks to the cyclists' public affairs group, the Cyclists Touring Club, the cycling campaign network and the London cycling campaign. I have not forgotten SUSTRANS, of course. I hope that all the organisations which are now lobbying us will continue to do so after the debate, which will help us to ensure that cycling is examined closely.

We have heard much this morning about how we can promote cycling. It is not that easy. We must make cycling safer, which means turning our attention to enforcement. I am concerned that traffic regulation work is no longer the priority that it once was to our police force. The Department of Transport must work closely with the Home Office to ensure that action is taken to make cycling safer in London and throughout the country.

We have heard a great deal about the health advantages that come from cycling, and they are indeed tremendous. By encouraging cycling, we could reduce the risk of asthma. We could deal with urban congestion by a better promotion of cycling. We must work closely with the Department of Health.

Children should be encouraged to start as they mean to go on, through the provision of safer cycle routes to school. As I have said, we must reduce urban congestion.

I should declare an interest, because I have a bike. I tend to use it only for excursions on cycle routes. I want to feel safe about cycling, and I want all the children in my constituency similarly to feel safe. I hope that the Minister will tell us how he proposes to work alongside his colleagues at the Department of Education.

Money must be made available for pilot projects to introduce safe cycle routes to school. The guidance issued by the Department of Transport must take account of transport policy programme submissions. Local authorities should not regard cycling and provision for it as appendages to traffic proposals. Cycling must be integrated within those proposals.

I want Minister to say how he proposes to do that. As I have stressed, there must be safe cycling routes to school. Local authorities should work in conjunction with education departments throughout the country. There must be a switch to cycling. That will lead to a lessening of congestion in inner urban areas. Public transport is not the only answer. In addition, we must promote cycling and walking.

I would like to mention briefly the work of SUSTRANS. Reference has already been made to this wonderful visionary project: a national cycle network that will go the length and breadth of the country. I do not want it to go just up the east coast. I want it to go up the west coast as well. I want it to go through the various constituencies near the one that I represent. I want it to go from the west side to the east side, and that must be reflected in the bids that are made by local authorities.

We must have an undertaking from the Minister that, rather than the balance towards the roads programme, to which his Department has given money, he will be prepared to fund, with the SUSTRANS proposals, the cycling proposals that could give us a national network, which would then offer wonderful opportunities for tourism as well.

Reference has been made to the railways. In the short time that the Minister has to reply, we really must hear how much further his Department is prepared to take forward the whole issue about bikes and trains.

We are already looking at the investment that is needed in the railways. The Labour party is absolutely opposed to the privatisation of the railways, but the Minister must tell us how far the Department of Transport will go to see what can be done to get the new train operating units prepared to introduce facilities for cyclists.

Is it the case that the regulator, John Swift, will be prepared to go further on this issue? If we cannot get bicycles carried on trains, if we cannot get a truly integrated transport system, people will continue to be cyclists—like myself—who just go out on special excursions and do not make the journeys in inner-city areas and rural communities that we want to see.

My message is that we must all go out and do what we can to ensure that we have a truly integrated transport system, and that cycling takes its place in that.

11.21 am

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): I agree with the hon. Member for (Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) about one thing: it is a great shame that these debates are not longer. It is one of the best that I have listened to in many years.

There is often a temptation for people who gather for a debate like this to translate the particular esoteric subject under discussion into the most important item on the national agenda, and it is perfectly natural that they should. I think that this is an occasion on which a group of hon. Members have recognised that this subject is treated as a poor cousin, and that it simply ought not to be. That was a theme that ran through all of the speeches today.

For me, it has been a very enjoyable debate in the sense that I believe that there has been agreement—on both sides of the House, with remarkably little exception—about what the agenda should be, about the challenges, about the dangers and the hazards, and about how we get there.

I start, as others have done, by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan). I wonder whether I am the only Member of the House who has drawn, with some amusement and no little affection, a contrast between the present hon. Member for Blaby and his predecessor, Lord Lawson, of whom Commissioner Kinnock once said, "Lawson and energy—now there's a contradiction in terms." How much our former right hon. Friend would have enjoyed this debate, I cannot for a moment imagine.

Then I come, of course, to the figure of my good self, probably the most unlikely convert to cycling that the House can contemplate, a man who has been—somewhat, erroneously, I may say—identified as an advocate of a car economy. It has indeed fed the Norris children for a few years, but I have no more interest in that than in any other part of the extraordinarily interesting portfolio that transport is.

I say to the House, in all seriousness, that, as I have looked at the problem of how one deals with urban congestion in a modern city centre, over the past three years, with huge interest and enthusiasm, I have become convinced that this country has hugely undervalued cycling.

Let me put the figures into context. It came to me, as often happens, after one had spent a long time debating how we could get the best out of public transport. The hon. Member for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler), who spoke from the Liberal Benches, was quite right when he said that all our great energy went into improving public transport, and rightly so; that is where the mega money gets spent. No doubt that will continue in many ways to be the case.

We have all been overlooking something that is staring us in the face. It came to me, I may say, in a statistical table that SUSTRANS itself deployed: in this country, about 2.5 per cent. of journeys are made by cycle, that the European average is 15 per cent., and in other cases it is higher.

Earlier, from a sedentary position, the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), who I know enjoyed the earlier part of the debate, when cycling in this country was discussed and after somebody had mentioned Holland, said, "It's flatter." He is right, of course; it is indeed flatter. But the great mistake that we have made in this country is to say, "Of course they cycle in Holland, because it's flat."

The hon. Gentleman should have been with me in Birmingham, at the SUSTRANS conference, where we had an extremely interesting exposition from a Swiss delegate. Whatever one likes to say about Switzerland, it is not flat. The reality is that Switzerland has a cycle strategy, and there is a huge difference between the proportion of cycle journeys made there and in this country.

I believe that the crucial link has been mentioned already. If one really wants to know the difference between this country and others, it is the fact that, in Denmark, one is 10 times saferas a cyclist. That is why the Danes make 10 times more journeys by cycle than we do in this country. I do not think that it has anything to do with the weather or the terrain. After all, the terrain in this country differs hugely from town to town. Yet we see massive variations in cycling as a proportion of the total number of trips, depending on the community we are in.

Mr. Thomas Graham (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde) *rose—*

Mr. Norris: I did say to the hon. Gentleman that I would let him intervene, and as he is about as likely a cyclist as I am, I shall let him in.

Mr. Graham: I am most grateful to the Minister for giving way. As he quite rightly points out, Scotland is very hilly. A week on Saturday, I am launching a Bobath cycle race for nearly 2,000 people in Scotland. For the Minister's interest, I have given up smoking. In the past 12 weeks, I have not had a smoke. I am hoping to go a least a couple of hundred yards, and perhaps the following year to do a hundred miles. I invite everyone in the House to come along and take part in that cycle race, which is a good healthy pursuit, an environmental pursuit, and at the end of the day is for a good cause.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Gentleman makes a shameless advertisement, which I applaud him for. I am delighted to say that I thought that he was looking rather well. I am glad that he has given up the evil weed. All I will say to him is, for goodness' sake, do not wear lycra. I can see him doing more damage to the lycra industry in one fell swoop than a mountain of urban terrorists have done in 10 years.

My dubious contribution to the Hovis National Bike Week—now there is a shameless advertisement on national television—will be to join a gentleman who I believe is called "Mr. Motivator". I had assumed that that referred to Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare, but I am told that this gentleman is a televisual performer. He and I, and a number of hon. Members from both sides of the House, will be cycling to the Palace during this week.

Let me get down, if I may, in the last couple of minutes to some serious points that we must put on the record. It is about safety. It is about separating cyclists from other road users. It is therefore about priority. It is about pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, the private car and

[Mr. Norris]

so on. It is about recognising that in all our planning. It is about ensuring that our transport supplementary grant recognises cycling right at the centre of the strategy. That is why our transport policy programme advice stresses cycling in a very new and specific way.

In answer to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley), our transport supplementary grant expenditure, through the package approach, which she should be up to date with, will have cycling right at its centre. That means working with education authorities. It means taking on a great many of the points that my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby made, in an excellent speech, about the way in which we treat the cyclist in urban traffic. It simply is not good enough to have cyclists competing with 40 ft trucks. We have to give them their own discrete road space.

In answer to hon. Members who mentioned parking, I have become convinced that it will not be enough simply to give the cyclist a white-lined area as part of the main carriageway. In many cases, the continental experience teaches us that we can look to offering a discrete part of the whole road area to the cyclist—to pedestrians, cyclists and then other traffic. Nothing irritates elderly pedestrians more than cyclists who say, "Well, I'd sooner be a threat to them then have the truck be the threat to me." There was a lot of that in what my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) called "cycling terrorism". There is no doubt that that is the direction in which we must move.

Ms Walley: Targets.

Mr. Norris: The hon. Lady, from a sedentary position, says, "Targets." She knows that I have only 30 seconds left.

There is an excellent amount of mileage to be got from the idea of defining for ourselves in the national cycling strategy a way in which to take all the issues forward. I would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss that with interested Members at length. Targets certainly have their place in that, and, to the extent that we want to build them in, recognising the difference between Bradford and York in terms of terrain, history, tradition and so on, I am sure that it is right that we should do so.

I am delighted that the debate has taken place, and only sorry to have had such an inadequate amount of time in which to reply to it. I blame none of those who have contributed, because their contributions have been superb.

Mine Shafts

11.30 am

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I am grateful for the opportunity to put before the House an extremely serious situation which is affecting many hundreds of my constituents and which has the potential to affect many thousands more. Although the subject of the debate is described by a single word on the Order Paper, I am particularly concerned with the events that led up to that situation which arises as a result of the reaction of the Coal Authority to mining searches, particularly with reference to abandoned mine shafts.

Therefore, I begin by giving a brief history of how we have arrived at the present position. In the early 1980s, the Waddilove committee, appointed by the Department of Energy, recommended that there should be a standardised response in mining searches by the then British Coal, particularly with regard to identifying abandoned mine shafts, when property is being bought and sold. No one argues that that was not a sensible approach.

That resulted in a working group being established between the Law Society and British Coal to examine ways in which it could be done. My inquiries show clearly that that is when the trouble began. Presumably, the working group was set up with the full knowledge of the Government. Its brief was to examine the situation and establish a standardised response to mining searches. The group beavered away for three or four years, or perhaps a little longer, on this important issue.

The first important point is that, as far as I can detect, there was no consultation at all in the process and the examination was clouded in secrecy. Nevertheless, in 1989 an agreement was reached between British Coal and the Law Society on a standardised response which, as I understand it, was implemented in 1991. Those decisions, taken in secrecy, have tremendous significance and serious implications because hundreds of my constituents, and potentially many thousands more throughout the country, at the stroke of someone's pen, found themselves facing a financial and social tragedy because the value of their properties was, at a stroke, to use that famous phrase, destroyed.

Coal exists in every part of Stoke-on-Trent, in Staffordshire and in many other parts of the country. Mine workings date back to the middle ages. There was a rapid expansion in the middle of the 18th century. Pits were worked out and abandoned and mine shafts were abandoned. In recent years, surveys have identified no fewer than some 4,000 disused mine shafts in particular areas. Those mining operations were unplanned and random. No precautions were taken to protect the public from them or from the abandoned mine shafts.

Since nationalisation in 1946-47, the costs of repairing damaged properties and making safe disused shafts were met by the industry or the taxpayer. But those costs must be viewed in a wider context—the social and human costs—which implies direct Government intervention and finance.

The Waddilove committee report was then examined by the working group, but despite that, between the working group being established and the decision being taken in 1989, I can find no evidence of any co-ordinated response towards mining searches. The only evidence that

I have been able to establish is that, during that critical period, when solicitors obtained responses from British Coal to searches involving mine shafts, they were told whether there was or was not a mine shaft within the vicinity of the property—within the vicinity. That was the response that they were given during the period up to 1989 by British Coal.

British Coal knew what that meant, the Law Society knew what that meant and solicitors knew what that meant. It meant within 5 m of the property. The only people who did not know what it meant were the poor souls who were purchasing and selling the properties. They were kept in the dark, and the consequences of that were horrendous.

There is certainly no evidence that I can detect of any guidelines being issued in the period between the working group being set up and the agreement being reached between the Law Society and British Coal—that is, before 1989. That is a significant issue which I shall be asking the Minister to consider.

The results of the working group in 1989 have been accepted by British Coal, the Law Society and solicitors and recognised by Government. The 5 m rule of thumb distance that was used by those organisations was never recorded or identified but, nevertheless, was accepted and used. Of that there can be no doubt. I have had that confirmed by British Coal and solicitors and I have had it recognised by the Law Society. However, the clients, the people who were buying and selling the properties, were blissfully unaware of the trap into which they were entering.

I understand that, before 1989, British Coal offered no advice on mine shafts unless it was specifically asked. In other words, if a solicitor who was doing the conveyancing did not specifically ask about mine shafts, British Coal did not believe that it was its responsibility to make any reference to them at all.

What has happened since 1989, when the Law Society and British Coal agreed on a new definition of responses to mining searches? In 1989, the year in which the Government recognised that an agreement had been reached on changing the definition, and when British Coal and the Law Society agreed on changing the definition, guidelines were issued by the Law Society—the very year in which it had been agreed to change the rules. I have the guidelines here and there is no reference whatever to the fact that the 5 m rule of thumb, which had been accepted for the previous 10 years, had been changed to 20 m by agreement in that year in the full knowledge of the Government. The guidelines from the Law Society are here and they contain no reference whatever to 20 m.

I also have a copy of guidelines that were issued in 1991 by the Law Society some two years later when, for the first time, 20 m appeared. They state:

"The presence of a disused shaft within or about 20 metres of the boundary of the property should be a matter of particular concern."

Therefore, my constituents, and many other people, having bought and sold properties in the mid-1980s on the basis of a mine search stating that there was no mine shaft in the vicinity which, unknown to them, meant within 5 m, when they come to sell their properties in the early 1990s, are then told, after a mine search, that there is a mine shaft because the 5 m distance has been extended, by secret agreement—apart from what the Government know about it—to 20 m. As a result, the value of those people's properties has been devastated.

In December 1993, I wrote to the Minister for Energy, who was good enough to reply reassuringly, expressing the hope that my concern would be allayed by a press release issued earlier in the month. The press release was interesting, in that it showed that the Government knew what was going on, and revealed British Coal's attitude to the detection of mine shafts. Apparently:

"It may be that in certain circumstances the present owner may be entitled to some remedy which might extend to the cost of locating and if necessary making safe the shaft."

That was agreed in December 1993 by the Government, the Law Society and British Coal.

Reports following mining searches conducted on 8 August 1994 and 17 May 1995 make no reference to 20 m. Even after the agreement reached in 1989 and its implementation in 1991—of which the Government were fully aware—houses were still being bought and sold, and reports of mining searches made no reference to the changed rules. I consider that that makes the authorities involved culpable.

I have yet to find any evidence that suggests that, before 1991, the Law Society or solicitors were offering any advice about the implications for people's properties of responses to mine searches from what was British Coal and is now the Coal Authority. Even after the Minister for Energy had assured me in his letter that everything was okay, that new guidelines had been agreed and that there was nothing to worry about, British Coal, solicitors and, presumably, the Law Society were accepting mining search responses that contained no reference to the 20 m rule. That presents the Government with some serious questions.

The issue is vital to many hundreds, potentially thousands, of families. After two years of campaigning, led by constituents of mine who are affected by this disaster, writs have been issued against the Coal Authority in three cases. I cannot comment on individual cases, but I suspect that the Coal Authority's strategy is to fight every case in court. I believe that it recognises that, if it is prepared to fight every one of those hundreds of cases in court, it will grind down those who seek justice simply because they cannot afford to take their cases to court, even with legal aid. Even if they could afford it, so many cases are involved that it would take many years for justice to be done and be seen to be done. In the meantime, families' homes and life savings are being blighted and the value of their properties reduced by at least two thirds. That is negative equity with a vengeance.

This is a chronic injustice, and cannot be acceptable. The whole process was conducted secretively in the 1980s and subsequently, with the knowledge and acquiescence of the Government. First, the Government should ensure that the Coal Authority investigates the mine shafts to establish their status, as is indicated by the press release sent to me by the Minister for Energy in 1993. The Coal Authority is currently refusing to do that; it is merely sending out a plan setting out its responses, bearing a little black dot.

Secondly, the Government should inquire into the activities of the Law Society and solicitors. I am extremely concerned about the fact that I have been able to identify no advice given to clients who were purchasing properties about the meaning of the words "in the vicinity" and the change in the rules.

[Mr. George Stevenson]

Thirdly—here I offer the example of the Personal Investment Authority—a compensation fund should be set up, financed by the Government, the Coal Authority and the Law Society. If such a fund is appropriate for those whose pensions have been destroyed as a result of bad advice or no advice, why is it not appropriate for those whose homes have been devalued because of bad advice or no advice?

Families have seen the largest purchase that they are likely to make destroyed at a stroke through no fault of their own. If the Government respond positively to this chronically serious situation, a massive injustice can be speedily resolved.

11.46 am

Mr. Mark Fisher (Stoke-on-Trent, Central): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) on securing the debate and on setting out the problem so clearly. As he said, a number of different problems are involved. He is one of, sadly, only a small number of hon. Members—perhaps only a small number of people in the country—who have grappled with the legal and geological complexities of the mine shaft issue and, indeed, the wider issue of subsidence. He is right to say that a major injustice has been perpetrated: homes and their prices are being blighted by the new guidelines and the ignorance that surrounded them.

Subsidence often causes disastrous damage to properties. Both problems—the effect on house prices and the effect on the fabric of people's homes—have a huge impact: not just a financial impact, but an impact on people's personal and emotional lives and their security. Now that increasing emphasis is placed on the value of a person's major or sole capital asset—which is often the source of that person's long-term security, providing the wherewithal for care in later life—the strain caused by a threat to, or the loss of, that asset is especially severe for those who are struggling to gain compensation and justice in unhappy and unnecessary circumstances. It is corroding their lives.

A week after I became a Member of Parliament in 1983, a constituent visited my very first advice surgery. He had already been battling with my predecessor for many years over subsidence and its effect on his life. That young man—he was in his mid-thirties—was angry, baffled and confused; but he was determined that his future, and that of his young children, should not be destroyed.

That case has been going on for all the 12 years that I have been a Member of the House. That man has been struggling with those problems for over 14 years. He is now disabled; he is broken; his whole life has been destroyed. Some people would say that he has become obsessed by the issue, but if the value of one's house and one's potential to move and to care for—and create a good home for—one's children and wife are threatened, hon. Members will understand that it is easy to become obsessed and continue to battle for justice; and very easy, as with that man, to be broken.

In introducing the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South said that this is a monumental injustice. It is a whole variety of different injustices that are taking place all over the country and destroying people's lives. My hon. Friend illustrated the second problem, of the inequality of the legal battle to get justice and compensation. The truth is that British Coal, now the Coal Authority, has—somewhat to its credit—a huge legal department. It has great geological expertise. It has a power and ability to sustain legal confrontation and wrangling far beyond that of the ordinary individual.

Many cases have come to me and my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent, South and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) who are fortunate enough to represent the city of Stoke. The city is built on coal and honeycombed by mine shafts and mine workings. Subsidence and the specific problems associated with mine shafts are an everyday event in Stoke-on-Trent. It happens all over the city and in many other cities in this country.

People are grappling with the problem. They come to our advice surgeries month after month with new cases, especially since 1989 and the confusion that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South outlined over mine shafts. When people engage with first British Coal, and now the Coal Authority, the battle is always totally unequal.

In the literally dozens and dozens of cases that I have assisted my constituents to tackle over the past 12 years, I have never won a single one. I do not think that that is inefficiency on my part or that of the solicitors who have assisted my constituents; it is almost impossible to win a case against British Coal, now the Coal Authority, because it has much greater expertise. It has power, expert advice and lawyers, and the ability to sustain battles far beyond the patience or pocket of most people. I doubt whether many hon. Members have won a mine shaft or mining subsidence case. Very few have been won.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South said, the situation is totally unacceptable and unfair in a society that believes in common justice for people when problems arise through no fault of their own. They cannot be left to the vagaries of the system or in the grip of a legal battle with an authority that is far more powerful and expert than they are. I am glad that the Minister is listening to the debate, because the Government are responsible for the matter. I do not think that anyone would claim that the Government caused the problem, but they have responsibility for the urban environment and for the conduct of the legal aid system and the Coal Authority. If they are concerned about the people who elected them, they should and must have some responsibility for and concern about relieving those completely unnecessary problems.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South said, there are a number of things that can be done. The Government have to rethink the guidelines—or get the Law Society and all those involved to rethink them—and establish a fairer and better way of operating. They have to reconsider the question of legal advice and create a level playing field in respect of legal advice between the experts and individual members of the public.

At the very least, the Government should inquire into the conduct of the Law Society and British Coal to establish the facts and give a national picture in terms of what my hon. Friend and I have said. Our evidence is mainly anecdotal from our constituency casework, but a large number of people are being broken on the wheel

of this problem totally unnecessarily. It is a monumental injustice. The Government must surely be concerned and act on the matter now.

11.54 am

Mr. Eric Clarke (Midlothian): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) on raising this issue. I intend to tackle the problem from another angle, but it is an important one which affects us all.

In 1946, the then new National Coal Board decided to decentralise the plans that had been lodged in London of all the coalfield workings up to that date. The areas to which the plans were sent were designated by the National Coal Board, because the common sense that prevailed was that that was where they were needed. To get any idea of how to win coal, one must look at old workings, because one can then see the danger of encroaching into them. They are full of water and gas and a host of other problems. The decentralisation was a technical change, but it meant that the people who needed the plans—the mineral surveyors in those areas—could get ready access to them.

In 1994, the plans that were lodged in Scotland for the Scottish area were sent to Bretby. They have been decentralised and centralised again. The Coal Authority is turning history on its head. If we are to continue to develop old mining areas, then before we even start laying the foundations of anything, whether it be a factory or a road or whatever, a mineral surveyor has to examine the plans. I do not know where Bretby is. I do not know what county it is in, but it is certainly south of the border, in England, and miles away. If a mining surveyor had to visit it, it would mean an overnight stay and a cost to the individual or development concerned.

I hope that the Minister is listening, because this is an important facet of the matter. I ask the Government to reconsider their whole attitude to the lodging of plans. I should like to change it back to what it was. I have a vested interest because it happens that the plans were lodged in my constituency at Newbattle, although they did not have to be kept there and many other places were willing to take them under their umbrella. The privatisation of the plans is a worry to us because they may be handed to over to Group 4 or some other company to look after, with all the consequential horrors that may follow. That may be costly and not as efficient as we would like.

The plans are important because, when we talk about shafts, we are talking about a multitude of different things. The shafts can be very deep and very large, and they can be aslant. They may be old bell pits, which have a small hole in the top. Many moons ago, mining was done using the bell system. Such pits collapsed regularly and are not recorded in the plans.

People say that the plans can be wired down or faxed up. Sometimes, survey maps show a multitude of seams with varied colours, perhaps not so drastic as hard blues or hard reds, but with shades of different colours. With age, the colours fade into insignificance and all look the same. One can spot things that one was not looking for on such a plan. In other words, the mineral surveyor has to see the original plan before he can approve any development move afoot. I plead with the Government to reverse what has been done. It is so important.

Abandoned workings are important. In one disaster—I think that it was the Lofthouse disaster—we found that the workings which tapped into the pit were full of water; the shafts had been filled in, but not capped. Old railway lines or girders, or whatever was to hand, had been sunk into the side of the shaft 30 ft or 40 ft down—or even less—battens had been put on top and the shaft was only partly filled in. The rest of the shaft was empty and over the years it filled with water from the workings below. Such shafts become a sort of underground reservoir, like an artesian well in reverse. If tapped into, the huge column of water in the shaft gets into the workings.

After the Lofthouse disaster, or whatever disaster it was, the National Coal Board sought to find out where the shafts were. It had to call on local knowledge because the records were not absolutely spot on. The ordnance surveys of the geology were not accurate. In other words, faults were discovered in the plans.

If we are to bring prosperity back to the mining areas which have been decimated by the closure of the mines, we must ensure that accurate information about the plans is given. We have heard horrendous stories about houses being undermined by old workings. Many of the old privately owned coal companies had what were called "marches"—lines defining where they could or could not work a seam of coal—but many companies encroached on those lines through greed and the barriers between one seam of coal and another were removed. In some cases, they even broke through a march to steal machinery and plant; it was common knowledge that such things happened, but the breaches were not recorded on the plans. Many people therefore think that they are sitting on a solid piece of ground that was not worked because there had been a march, but I have news for them: the seams were worked, but not systematically.

The modern method is total extraction by the long wall system, but the old system was the stoop and room system. In other words, barriers or squares of coal were left in place, which caused undulation on the surface. Many workings were near the surface, so the subsidence became even worse. Some may even have been at an angle, because some seams of coal do not lie on a horizontal plane but undulate. Some are practically vertical in some parts of the country.

All those complications have to be borne in mind. When added to the other problems of mining subsidence caused by industries involving the extraction of lime and clay and the working of gravel pits, the seriousness of the matter becomes even clearer. Many clay pits in and around Stoke-on-Trent were worked under the old system but then open-casted and done away with. If one multiplies all those problems in an industrial urban area, and in some of the rural areas that are now being developed, the potential for disaster is clear.

I plead with the Minister to understand that it is nonsense to centralise the plans and to impose further costs on an individual who is building a house or on a company or developer. I am playing the Scottish card but it sticks in the craw, as people say in Scotland, that we should have to hand over our plans to an English organisation way down south, wherever it is, which means that we have to get on a plane or train to find out about our plans. They should be lodged in Scotland, in Wales and in the regions where people want to look at them.

[Mr. Eric Clarke]

I do not want to go down south to look at the north-east plans or the Welsh or Stoke-on-Trent plans. The people of Scotland are not interested in them. The plans should be lodged where the relevant people can have access to them. Bretby might be nearer to Stoke-on-Trent than to Scotland—I do not know—but I want our plans brought back to Scotland. I hope that the Minister will see common sense. I guarantee that we can fix up a company or organisation that will look after the plans properly and at reasonable cost and ensure that the people of Scotland and the mineral surveyors have easier and cheaper access to them than would be the case if the plans went to Bretby.

12.14 pm

Ms Joan Walley (Stoke-on-Trent, North): With the leave of the House, I should like to speak about mine shafts and adits, which are very important to my constituents. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) on bringing the issue to the House's attention. It is important to put it on record that in Stoke-on-Trent especially, but also in other parts of the country, there is a particular problem because our coal mining industry developed haphazardly. It was not simply a matter of sinking a deep shaft in one or two places; as my hon. Friend said, the way in which the industry developed means that we have a large number of abandoned mine shafts and adits which are causing huge problems for so many of our constituents.

The purpose of the debate is to express to the Minister how important it is that he tells us what action he is prepared to take in the Department of Trade and Industry and what action he is prepared to take with other organisations—I am thinking especially of the Law Society and the Department of the Environment—to try to find a real and lasting solution to the problems being experienced in Stoke-on-Trent.

In recent months, we have heard a great deal about the problem of water pollution caused by abandoned mines, something that has been the subject of much discussion in debates on the Environment Bill which is currently in Committee. The problem in Stoke-on-Trent is like a time bomb ticking away and has been hugely underestimated. For the purpose of social justice, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) referred, the Government must make it clear that they are prepared to deal with the problem.

I said that the basic problem is the legacy of mining and the way in which it developed over the centuries. I have had extensive discussions with officers of the Departments of Trade and Industry and of the Environment, who seem to deny that there is an environmental problem. It is true that there is a problem with derelict land contaminated as a result of extensive mining operations, but there is also an environmental problem. Important research and evidence recently produced by the Institution of Environmental Health Officers have confirmed once and for all that there is not only a problem of contamination and dereliction but an environmental problem. As we have heard, the way in which the air is affected by the old shafts could lead to further contamination. I want to hear the Minister accept for the record that there is an environmental problem.

The problem came to light in Stoke-on-Trent only about three years ago, largely because of the decision by the Law Society and the Coal Authority. As far as I can work out, the decision has no legal status and was entirely voluntary. It may have been publicised at the time, but it was certainly not well publicised.

Mr. Stevenson: Does not the fact that the Minister wrote to me in the most reassuring terms in December 1993 enclosing a copy of the Law Society's press release prove that the Government accepted de facto what British Coal and the Law Society had done?

Ms Walley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Government have accepted what has been done. I was attempting to make the point that there does not seem to be any basis in statute for action, but the Government must none the less take responsibility for the decisions.

The practice of building societies and insurers stems from the decisions, too. It is quite clear that people who were deemed fit to be granted a mortgage on a particular property and who now wish to extend their mortgage, perhaps to extend their property, having found that they cannot sell it, are being refused permission. A letter sent to a constituent of mine from the Britannia building society makes it clear that such practice is a result of the agreement between the Coal Authority and the Law Society. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South, I do not think that the Minister can escape responsibility for such decisions. It is important that he understands exactly how that decision affects people in our constituencies.

We only realised that there was a problem about three years ago when it began to come to light that the 20 m decision was preventing people from obtaining mortgages on properties that they wished to purchase. Previously, the housing market was not really moving and houses were not selling. It is only since there has been some movement, although very little, in the housing market that huge problems have come to light. That is why so many people now find themselves living in a home that is blighted, yet to all intents and purposes it is absolutely fine and is in one sense in no risk of subsidence.

It is a question not only of whether the Coal Authority will take responsibility if a house is swallowed by a huge hole as a result of some subsidence or disturbance but of whether the Government will take responsibility for the blight which stretches right across north Staffordshire and affects areas of Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme. We want to know how the Government propose to deal with that important issue.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) commented at length on another problem: the way in which the records of the Coal Authority have been centralised and stored. My constituents have another problem. When it is put to them that there is a mine shaft or an adit within 20 m of their property within their curtilage, some dispute the decision and spend huge sums of money on independent mining searches to prove that the shaft is not where the Coal Authority located it, but somewhere else, perhaps within 20 m of somebody else's home.

Even when constituents have gone to considerable expense to commission an independent mining report, the Coal Authority has not been prepared to accept that a shaft has been located in a different place, despite what the report said. Therefore, even having gone to such lengths

to try to remove blight from their properties, individual home owners are stuck with a report from the Coal Authority that suggests that, because there is some doubt, it perceives that a mine shaft is within 20 m of their property. Despite so much effort, constituents still cannot sell their properties.

There is an environmental problem to be considered. Given that the Government have accepted responsibility, the problem is what they are to do about it. There is also a problem with the collation of records and how we can prove them right or wrong. But the real crux of the issue is that, like my hon. Friend, I cannot conceive of individuals having to spend five or 10 years of their life taking legal action to try to resolve the issue in some way or another. The Government must do something about that. What will it be? That is what we want the Minister to tell us.

The problem could be solved properly by establishing an open register of information. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Stoke-on-Trent, South has done an enormous amount of work on getting access to information. Given the derelict land and the legacy of coal mining, people are entitled to know about the Coal Authority's records. They are entitled to know that those records are correct and they are entitled to seek from the Coal Authority some statement of whether a particular shaft, having been correctly identified, does or does not threaten a property. If the shaft does not threaten a property, some plain legal statement of that fact should be made by the Coal Authority and the Law Society to enable people wishing to sell or purchase properties to obtain insurance and mortgages without any problems. Such a statement would instantly remove the blight.

When the Coal Authority and the proposed environment agency—it is also an environmental issue—are not prepared to say that there is no threat whatever to a particular dwelling because of the accurately located mine shaft or adit, we would need to explore the possibility raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South of considering some compensation scheme, so that the cost of putting right the problems of the mine shafts is met by those responsible for that legacy and not picked up as an individual item of expense by an unsuspecting person who bought their property not knowing of the blight affecting it.

The Government must address those issues. I cannot begin to tell the Minister—I hope that he will visit Stoke-on-Trent to see the problems for himself and speak to our constituents—the extent of sheer desperation felt by local people because they cannot resolve the issue. It is not enough for the Minister to say that the problem is the responsibility of another Department or of the Coal Authority. Concerted action must be taken across the Departments with the DTI taking the lead. We have seen the cavalier way in which British Coal has been sold off. It is all well and good to sell off parts of British Coal that make profits for the likes of Mr. Budge and others, but responsibility must also be taken for the various liabilities in the ground. We want the Government to take responsibility and find a way to deal with the injustices faced by our constituents.

12.17 pm

Mr. Martin O'Neill (Clackmannan): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) on securing this Adjournment debate and apologise to him for missing the early part; I was held up in traffic coming back from another meeting. I had the opportunity, however, to speak to him and to those in his office earlier in the week. We were able to go over a number of the points which he has raised today and which our hon. Friends who represent Stoke have reinforced this morning.

The problem which has emerged in north Staffordshire may be of a broader national significance because it stems in some respects at least as a consequence of the agreement to redefine the acceptable distance between mine shafts and households from 20 m to 5 m, which obviously affects a far greater number of properties. That has, of course, resulted in blight and difficulties in valuing properties.

In correspondence between the House of Commons Library and British Coal and the Law Society, the Law Society suggested that the solution for vendors or people who find themselves in difficulty relating to blight would be to instruct an engineer or a mining surveyor to report the most likely location and condition of the mining shaft for a reasonable fee. It is unreasonable to expect that of people who are already living in a house, who have been making their payments and who have carried out surveys in the past, simply because of a change in procedure. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) said, there is no legislation. There is simply a recommendation, a stroke-of-the-pen job—and the difficulties arising from that are facing people with limited resources.

My hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) was banging an old drum that he and I have been beating for many years when he talked about the problems caused by the removal of mining records from the mining areas. It is expensive to send people to other places, so the "reasonable fee" concept is stretched at every turn. It costs more and more for surveyors to do the job, because they may have to travel long distances and carry out considerable research.

My hon. Friend's knowledge of the Newbattle archive is second to none in the House and, as he said, mining plans operate on a layer-on-layer principle, so it is difficult for them to be faxed across the country. That is why it is essential for people to have easy access to them.

That would be difficult enough, even if it were the only problem, but we know that not only are about 150,000 mine shafts in the United Kingdom recorded on maps of varying qualities but it is estimated that there are no records at all for a further 150 mine shafts, whose location it would take different forms of research to establish. So, if I may try to anticipate what he may say in his summing up, we must not allow the Minister to hide behind the proposition that once a reasonable fee has been paid to a surveyor everything will be all right and the building societies, the banks and the other mortgage providers will be satisfied.

What has happened is not the result of malign intent on the part of the Law Society, British Coal or the Coal Authority. Nevertheless, the consequences of their action have created considerable difficulties for many people in Stoke-on-Trent and north Staffordshire—largely because of the thoughtlessness of the two authorities in failing to make proper provision for the results that would flow from their decision.

We need an inquiry into the role of the Law Society and we need to know what the status of mine shafts is, because we know that they are not all necessarily the

[Mr. Martin O'Neill]

source of environmental damage and safety risks. We must have a far clearer picture so that the people in the affected households and, perhaps even more important, potential lenders of funds to new buyers of the properties, know exactly what the position is.

I get the impression that the Law Society paid insufficient attention to the legal consequences, so it should be answerable for that. In the deathbed throes of its dying days, British Coal has become an irresponsible organisation, passing jobs on to other people, and the Coal Authority, not unnaturally, is stepping back and saying, "We are a new authority and we have limited resources. Why should we have to pick up the tab?"

Of course, the Coal Authority is funded by the Government, and if it finds that the problems are as serious as my hon. Friends suggest—I have no reason to doubt that they are—and that it will be required to help to remedy them, it will need additional funding to take the job on.

In recent years, there has been an enhanced appreciation of the problems of subsidence. In a way, the difficulties now arising are almost a by-product of the greater awareness of those problems. I hope that the Government will show a commitment to the problems arising from the discovery of mine shafts and the compensation now required or, alternatively, change the system of definition to make the position clearer. They have a choice, but the one choice that they do not have is to sit on their hands and do nothing.

I welcome the debate, because it provides the ideal opportunity for the Government to announce a series of steps in line with what my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South suggested. The Law Society, the Coal Authority and British Coal should get together and make clear the exact character and status of mine shafts, the dangers that they pose and their effects on the value of property when potential blight affects development and sale. After the inquiry, there should be some recognition that there are responsibilities that should be shared among those three bodies.

We shall have to consider the different ways in which the compensation fund could operate. In some instances, the question will be whether compensation is required at all. But legal aid must be provided so that until such time as the Government introduce some umbrella arrangement—

Mr. Stevenson: Will my hon. Friend reflect on the fact that, in the three cases in our area in which writs have been issued against the Coal Authority, all of which are legally aided, people have been required to pay contributions of up to £150 per month? My hon. Friend will realise that that effectively debars from the legal system people with a strong case who have been the victims of injustice.

Mr. O'Neill: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for telling me that. I have here a note from the Coal Authority that says that there are currently 23 court cases and that three writs have been received in legally aided cases alleging negligence or breach of contract. Even if people have not quite been economical with the truth, I am grateful to my hon. Friend for putting on the record the fact that the level of legal aid available does not make going to law attractive for the owners of small properties who want to move on because of the size of their families, but who have only limited resources. When such people try to bring court cases, they are hampered by the legal aid system. It offers a glimpse of the carrot but does not go anything like as far as would be necessary to deliver the goods.

The Government should act quickly and recognise that there is a serious problem, which will increase as more households become aware of difficulties that they had never realised existed. The longer it all takes and the further we get away from the reasons why the problem was created in the first place, the more difficult it will be to remedy it.

The Coal Authority is a fledgling authority with limited resources; it has nothing like the back-up that the old British Coal had. As has been explained, there are also increasing problems with the records. Action is needed as a matter of urgency, so I hope that the Minister will go some way towards meeting the three requests made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South. We need an investigation, an inquiry into the role of the Law Society and some compensation arrangements, and we need them quickly. That is why I am happy to support my hon. Friend.

12.28 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Firms, Industry and Energy (Mr. Richard Page): I, too, start by congratulating the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Stevenson) on having been fortunate enough to secure the debate. As I have said before, in my 20 years in the House I have never succeeded in securing even one such debate, although I put in for almost every one. I am going for the sympathy vote at an early stage.

The hon. Gentleman has raised matters that are of serious concern to his constituents, and I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to them. The fact that he has been supported by his two colleagues, the hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) and for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley), shows that there is widespread concern about the matters.

I welcome the opportunity to explain the relevant measures which have been implemented by the Government, and to suggest what those people who are affected can do for themselves. I hope to show that there is generally much less cause for concern on the issues than might appear at first sight, and I hope to conclude by making some suggestions as to how those concerns might be best allayed.

The hon. Member for Midlothian (Mr. Clarke) started with a highly partisan tirade against the English to which I shall not respond. The Health and Safety Commission advised that it was appropriate for the Coal Authority to take over British Coal's role as the custodian of the abandoned mine plans. There are good reasons why British Coal should centralise the records, and the cost of doing so includes the costs of duplication and providing the facilities needed to maintain the plans in proper condition.

The plans will be supervised by a qualified surveyor and, provided there is adequate access to and proper supervision of the plans, the Health and Safety Commission is content that safety will not be compromised. I understand the hon. Gentleman's

reluctance to travel across the border to Bretby, but he will find that he will be made most welcome if he wishes to inspect the plans.

I can give the hon. Gentleman a small piece of encouragement. In light of the concerns expressed about the removal of the plans from local mining consultants and surveyors in Newtongrange in Scotland, British Coal has removed to Bretby only those plans that are unique. The remainder of duplicate plans—some 87 per cent. of the original total—are to remain in Scotland. Where plans have been removed, British Coal has taken the helpful step of arranging for copies to be held on slides in Scotland, as well as a catalogue of plans.

Mr. Eric Clarke: I am aware that some plans will be left in Scotland, but we will need the up-to-date plans. There are historical plans which have not been verified, but the plans that are needed are not in Scotland but in Bretby. Mining engineers and representatives of mining surveyors have made representations on this matter. Someone who wants to see those plans must either go to Bretby or get copies sent by post. In the latter case, he or she will be unable to see from the copies what is happening in other parts of the surrounding area and will have to examine the original plans. The idea that the plans are all packaged and can be sent by post is not acceptable.

Mr. Page: I understand what the hon. Gentleman says, but I will not be able to give him any more comfort. I am sure that the post containing the appropriate plans for mining engineers to examine will get to Scotland from Bretby.

There are a number of different concerns in relation to mine shafts, and I shall try to respond to those that have been raised by hon. Members. I shall focus briefly on the potential risks of subsidence or shaft collapses relating to abandoned coal mines, and also on the mining report system now operated by the Coal Authority as it affects people trying to sell their homes. Those have been the central concerns of the debate.

As has been pointed out by all hon. Members who have spoken during the debate, there are a large number of mine entrances, shafts and adits throughout the country. The Coal Authority has records of about 150,000, and estimates that there may be many more which are unrecorded. Going on the experience of British Coal—this helps to put the matter into some perspective—the Coal Authority expects some 400 call-outs a year related to surface hazards, half of which may be related to both shafts and adits.

That may seem to be a large number, but I am given to understand that, in most cases, shafts are found in open fields rather than in someone's back garden. Very often, what is found is not a gaping hole but a dip in the ground similar to a shallow crater. I mention the numbers so that the House can see the matter on a proper scale.

We must keep in perspective the real incidence of serious problems relating to shafts, which is very low. There have been historic incidents in which people have fallen down mine shafts, but I understand that none of the Coal Authority staff concerned with subsidence can recall an incident within the past 10 or 20 years. Equally, where shafts are discovered it is relatively uncommon for them to cause damage to property. I understand that the Coal Authority has been called out to 300 incidents or problems since it took over responsibility for the matters last year.

Mr. Stevenson: A press release issued by the Minister for Industry and Energy in December 1993 clearly said that home owners would be entitled to investigations to establish the status of the mine shafts and, in some circumstances, the cost of making them safe. Will the Minister give an assurance that that will happen, because the Coal Authority is refusing to do anything of the sort?

Mr. Page: I was going to come to that matter later, but I shall deal with it now. I have not seen the release to which the hon. Gentleman refers, and I would like to have an opportunity to respond to him separately on that point once I have seen the document. He makes a valid point, but he will understand my natural scepticism until I have seen the release. I shall also take advice on the matter.

There have been about 300 incidents and problems since the Coal Authority took over responsibility last year. Some 180 were related to shafts or collapses of old workings, while damage was done to buildings in only four cases, none of which was structural damage. That should help to make everyone realise the size of the problems we are facing.

Ms Walley: We do not fear that there will be damage to properties as a result of the existence of mine shafts or adits. We are concerned about the blight on properties, and I hope that the Minister will come to that matter. Will he give a commitment on the blight that people are facing?

Mr. Page: I appreciate the point that the hon. Lady makes, and I shall come to that in a few minutes. I felt that it was important to give to the House the realities, rather than the perceptions. I mention those facts not to belittle the problems which have occurred but to put them in perspective. We should recognise that they are, in fact, relatively rare.

We should note that the problems are relatively rare in relation to the 150,000 or so coal mining entrances or shafts that are known. The disclosure that a shaft exists near a property should not realistically be a major cause for concern if the discovery is merely a result of a mining search. If a shaft has not given any trouble for 20, 50 or 100 years, it will not necessarily give any trouble in the future.

Mr. Fisher: Does the Minister not understand the point that my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, North (Ms Walley) made? We are concerned not with the physical danger caused by a mine shaft but with the effect that the shaft has on mortgage and insurance companies, who do not take as relaxed a view as the Minister. As soon as those companies are aware of the location of a mine shaft, they freeze any financial activity on a property. Will the Minister address that point?

Mr. Page: I do understand that point. If the hon. Gentleman could have contained his natural enthusiasm, for which he is well known in the House, he would have seen that I shall deal with that point. I am relaxed about it. I understand those concerns, which we all have in various shapes and forms, whether they are about a blight next to a motorway or about previously unknown underground workings. In most cases, the presence of an old mine shaft, even if not previously known, should pose no problems. The fact that a shaft has remained unknown shows that it has caused no problems.

[Mr. Page]

Law Society guidance gives the most practical course to be taken by property owners who are worried about a shaft that has been identified in a mining report. Subject to obtaining permission for any surface access needed, they can arrange for an engineer or mining service to access the shaft. In most cases, that results in a certificate showing that there is no risk of subsidence to the property.

Mr. Stevenson *rose—*

Mr. Page: Before the hon. Gentleman intervenes again, I should like to say that he has already referred to the notice that he received from my hon. Friend in the DTI, and I shall deal with that matter.

Mr. Stevenson: I apologise for interjecting like this but, with respect to the Minister, my concern is increasing. He said that he would try to help us and our constituents, but so far he has not done so. He talks about possible responses and how the Law Society's 1991 guidelines are being adhered to. For the first time, those guidelines mention 20 m. He will recall that I gave two instances of responses to mining searches, one in 1994 and another in 1995, which made no reference whatever to the 20 m. What is the point in having guidelines, which the Minister says are being implemented, when they are simply ignored?

Mr. Page: This will sound like a record, but I shall discuss some aspects of the legal responsibilities of those who conduct searches.

I was referring to the certificate that confirms that there is no risk. Even if an assessment is less reassuring, it should be remembered that the mining company responsible for the shaft or the Coal Authority, as appropriate, is obliged under the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991 to rectify any subsidence damage that the shaft has caused, no matter how extensive or minor the subsequent damage. I emphasise that clear statutory remedies are available, whatever the actual damage sustained by a property as a result of subsidence.

I have already mentioned the Coal Authority's responsibilities for safety. Any household with substantive grounds for concern about the safety of an old shaft should contact the authority.

The Coal Mining Subsidence Act shows what extensive and expensive remedies are available for subsidence damage. The provisions reflect the recommendations of the independent committee chaired by Mr. Lewis Waddilove, to which the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South referred. That committee carried out a thorough examination of the arrangements in place at the time and made 65 recommendations in its report published in 1984. It concluded that the main thrust of the existing provisions, both statutory and voluntary, were right, although some significant gaps remained to be filled. It recommended that the previous legislation be consolidated and extended, and that British Coal's voluntary code be enacted.

The Government accepted those recommendations in the 1987 White Paper entitled "The Repair and Compensation System for Coal Mining Subsidence Damage" and issued a consultative paper on the content of new legislation in 1988. The 1991 Act took into account comments received in response to that consultation exercise. It repealed most of the previous existing legislation and replaced it with a new statutory framework incorporating British Coal's voluntary undertakings and other recommendations made in the Waddilove report. It was the result of long and careful consultation and brought together several Acts of Parliament and codes of practice into a single Act, giving a wide definition of subsidence damage and introducing important improvements.

The practical effect of the legislation is to provide people affected by coal mining subsidence damage with a simple and straightforward claims procedure and a comprehensive set of remedies. It confers on the claimant a clear right to compensation, and places on the mining company or the Coal Authority a clear duty either to rectify the damage or to provide appropriate financial compensation to the claimant.

Ms Walley: We are discussing not damage that has occurred but people who cannot get adequate mortgages or insurance cover on their properties because of anticipated damage. To what extent do the existing regulations on subsidence embrace the aspect of blight relating to mine shafts and adits? Before the debate finishes at 1 o'clock, will the Minister deal with the problem that arises because building societies in our area tell our constituents that mortgage facilities will not be granted as a result of a decision made by the Coal Authority?

Mr. Page: Believe it or not, I shall deal with that point in a moment or two. It is important that I put on record the fact that a number of extensive arrangements and support measures are in place for people whose properties suffer subsidence. I hope that that will give some form of comfort to people who may be worried about buying a property, because those support measures can be used if they are unfortunate enough to suffer that damage.

It might be helpful at this point if I explain briefly how the claims procedure works. Under the 1991 Act, mining companies are obliged to notify all owners and occupiers who may be affected by subsidence damage as a result of the coming 12 months' mining. That notification includes a guidance booklet about claimants' rights, together with a form for making claims entitled "Damage Notice". Not everyone so notified suffers damage. For those who do, however, the next stage is to make a claim by completing the damage notice and sending it to the mine owner.

The Coal Authority, which handles all claims for the time being, has set itself specific targets for reducing waiting times at all stages of the claims process. Targets are being put in place to ensure that people are given notice within a certain period. During that time, the authority is busy compiling the mining report and claims history to ensure that its assessors are fully briefed. Its target for communicating a decision to the claimant on how to proceed after the inspection is a maximum of four weeks for 90 per cent. of cases. The target period for commencing remedial work after acceptance by the claimant of the authority's decision is a maximum of six weeks in 80 per cent. of cases.

Opposition Members will be fully aware of the arbitration system that is in place if a dispute arises. Two arbitration systems have been set up; both are run independently by the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators and are specifically designed to deal with disputes about

subsidence damage. Naturally, claimants also have the normal right to pursue any dispute through the court—in this case, the Lands Tribunal.

May I return to the problems raised by Opposition Members? In addition to their rights under the 1991 Act and dependent on circumstances, property owners may be entitled to financial remedies from one of the parties to earlier mining searches. That is from their solicitor or conveyancer or from British Coal. It would not be appropriate to discuss those legal possibilities in detail, but we should note their potential relevance.

During the debate, as I believe Opposition Members appreciate, I have been struck by the existence of an information gap. It is the object of the Opposition to make life difficult for the Government and to argue strongly on behalf of their constituents the cases that they consider appropriate, regarding which action should be taken. However, I believe that they have succumbed to the temptation to paint a picture that is slightly gloomier than reality.

Making due allowance for that, it appears that many people, especially in the Stoke-on-Trent region, are unaware of important aspects of the coal mining subsidence remediation regime, of the responsibilities of the Coal Authority for safety and of the helpful guidance that the Law Society has issued for tackling cases in which mining reports appear to show unexpected problems.

Mr. O'Neill: I gained the impression that the Minister was about to conclude. Will he tell us to what extent the Law Society, his officials in the Department of Trade and Industry and the banks and mortgage lenders generally have been in concert in discussing those problems? That is the key. With respect, we are worried, not about damage to property but about the consequences of blight on the value of property as a result of a change in planning arrangements—not even planning law.

What has happened in respect of the Law Society and the DTI officials and Coal Authority officials? Have they been able to communicate to the mortgage lenders the fact that the problems are not as great as the mortgage lenders would appear to believe? That is the problem that confronts us.

Mr. Page: I am unaware of any such discussions taking place to draw those anxieties to the attention of mortgage lenders, but I hope that what has been said in the debate will give some comfort and reassurance to mortgage lenders. However, bearing in mind what the hon. Gentleman has said, I am aware of no reason why I should not return to the Coal Authority and ask it to undertake a liaison operation with the mortgage lenders in the Stoke-on-Trent region to reassure them—exactly as I have endeavoured to reassure them today—about the general conditions and general supports that are available through the various Coal Acts, especially the Coal Mining Subsidence Act 1991.

Mr. Stevenson: On the Minister's proposed liaison, as I think he called it, with the Coal Authority, the mind boggles. However, when that happens, will he mention the Law Society guidelines of 1991, which for the first time mentioned a radius of 20 m, and the fact—I shall provide the Minister with copies—that I have in my hand two searches from the Coal Authority dated 1995 that make no mention of the 20 m? When he meets the Coal Authority, will he mention the fact that the guidelines that were issued by the Law Society in 1991 and in 1989 are not being implemented in 1995?

Mr. Page: I return to what I said in response to the hon. Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill). Yes, I will arrange that liaison and I will more than willingly draw attention to what appears to be a failure to mention that matter in the searches. The Coal Authority is perfectly aware of the Law Society recommendations, and it is the Law Society that decided to review the advice to its members from the start.

I hope that this morning's debate has helped to shed more light on what has happened.

Ms Walley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Page: May I make a little progress, because I hope that we can shed more light on matters?

I hope that the Coal Authority can undertake that liaison, which will reassure many of those people in Stoke-on-Trent who are worried about the blight notice.

I would not want to make any specific suggestions today because I am sure that those who best know the local circumstances can advise on what the steps should be. I do know that the hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent, North and for Stoke-on-Trent, South will meet the chief executive of the Coal Authority shortly to explore the authority's role in more depth. I do not know whether the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central will join them to make it a triumvirate.

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): And the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme.

Mr. Page: And the hon. Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme. Perhaps I may leave them with the suggestion that further steps to give wider currency to those matters locally would be worth while. Naturally, the authority already has contacts with the building societies and has offered to meet and discuss the issues with interested parties. I emphasise that. Although those contacts exist, I have not been involved in those contacts and shall adopt the approach that I have already agreed. If that can contribute to some local initiatives that would improve understanding of their roles, I have no doubt that those organisations would wish to do so, and I would wish them to do so.

Ms Walley: I have one eye on the clock. I want to establish, before the Minister concludes, that he is able to confirm to the House that, whatever debate he has with the Coal Authority, he will subsequently meet my hon. Friends and me, with whomever else from the Law Society we feel will be necessary to make it possible to have a meaningful discussion, so that we can find a way of tackling the problems—in other words, that he will continue the dialogue, and that we can find a way to proceed following his further discussions with the Coal Authority.

Mr. Page: I always look forward to meeting the hon. Lady; I remember a private Member's Bill in which we made progress in helping merchant shipping. If, after that meeting with the Coal Authority, the hon. Lady and her colleagues feel that they have not made any ground and want to visit me to discuss the matter further, I shall be perfectly happy and more than prepared to do so.

[Mr. Page]

Before I say my last few words, I shall mention the current legal action against the authority, which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Clackmannan. It would obviously be inappropriate to debate any particulars of the case, which is, or may be, the subject of court proceedings. However, I understand from the Coal Authority that there are many cases relating to Stoke-on-Trent in connection with which it has received a letter before action or writ, and reference has been made to the numbers. In general, those cases relate to the disclosure of a disused mine shaft or mine shafts in a coal mining search report that were not disclosed in a previous report where the criteria were different. The authority is defending those actions; I strongly suspect that the two cases to which the hon. Gentleman refers are typical of those cases.

I understand that, as far as the Coal Authority is aware, none of the properties shows any sign of coal mining subsidence and, as I have explained, if they should suffer any such damage at any time there is a clear right to repair under the 1991 Act.

I shall now summarise. First, any old coal mine shafts can give rise to safety problems. They can also cause subsidence damage. Both types of problem are relatively unknown, not in absolute terms in relation to numbers of incidents but in relation to the large numbers of coal mining shafts that are known to exist. The mere presence of a shaft, where the shaft has not previously been identified on the ground and gives no practical problems, should not be a major concern or a cause of anxiety. That is a key matter. However, Opposition Members have made the understandable case regarding worries about blight.

Secondly, in the exceptional cases—exceptional in relation to the total number of shafts that are known—where old shafts give rise to safety or subsidence problems, there are clear statutory duties on the Coal Authority or, where relevant, on its lessees to act and to remedy any safety problem or subsidence damage.

Because of the low incidence of problems and the statutory right of householders where problems are encountered, there should be no widespread concern among mortgage lenders, conveyancers or house buyers in cases where a recent mining search discloses a shaft that was not recorded on earlier mining searches. In all cases, it will be necessary for an extension of the mining search process, in line with the Law Society's guidance, to include an assessment of the materiality of the shaft.

I am left with the feeling that there is an information gap on some issues. There may be further steps that could usefully be taken at a local level to improve awareness of the facts and the relevant statutory framework. I would welcome any moves in that direction.

University Funding (Luton)

1 pm

Sir Graham Bright (Luton, South): I welcome the opportunity to draw to the attention of the House an issue that effects my constituency and highlights one of the Government's most striking successes: the increase in participation rates in higher education. I welcome my two colleagues, my hon. Friends the Members for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) and for Bedfordshire, South-West (Sir D. Madel), who support the case that I shall put.

Recognising the importance of ensuring that the people of Britain are equipped with the highest level of education necessary to meet the challenges of the future, the Government made a manifesto commitment in 1992 to have one in three young people in higher education by the year 2000. To put that target in perspective, it should be remembered that, in 1979, the figure was only one in eight. In order to assist in achieving that target, huge sums of money were allocated to both revenue and capital funding for higher education establishments.

I am sure that the House will welcome the fact that the success of the Government's policy was such that the target levels of participation in higher education were achieved much sooner than originally envisaged, in 1993—seven years ahead of target. One third of young people now enter higher education and the participation rate for mature students has risen by 50 per cent. since 1979. We have the second highest graduation rate in the European Union, and our universities are internationally highly respected.

The achievement of the Government's aims ahead of target was possible only through the commitment of our universities which, as well as increasing student numbers, have also increased efficiency so that costs per student have substantially reduced. All universities have played their part in the success and all must be congratulated. However, as the hon. Member for Luton, South, I must say that some universities have played a greater part than others.

That is particularly true of the new universities, a group to which the university of Luton is the most recent English member, having been granted university status in 1993. Luton increased its full-time student numbers from 1,000 to 8,000 in four years, and has about 9,000 this year. Full-time students represent 65 per cent. of the total, and 28 per cent. of the total is made up of part-time higher education students. A further 7 per cent. are in-company or short-course students.

The strategic importance of Luton within the south-east cannot seriously be questioned. It was therefore right for the former Luton college of higher education fully to take on board Government policies and expand in order to reach university status.

Not only did the university of Luton increase the total number of full-time students, it expanded most in the subject areas that are job orientated—the so-called band 2 or workshop-based subjects. The band 1 to band 2 ratio at Luton is 49.8:50.2 per cent.—much lower than other higher education institutions. That means that Luton is educating more people in the subjects directly related to jobs than any other university. That is of particular importance when one considers that the unemployment rate in Luton is nearly 10 per cent. and, although decreasing, is still higher than the average in the south-east.

The university of Luton is also a teaching-oriented institution and believes that its expertise in the development of teaching skills, and a variety of teaching environments should be valued as such. In time, it will develop a research base, but its mission involves a strong commitment to creating opportunities for access to higher education for under-represented groups such as women and for those who do not have the traditional entry requirements for higher education.

Some 55.6 per cent. of the university of Luton's students are over the age of 21, and female students outnumber male students. That is perhaps not surprising when it is noted that 40 per cent. of the total are local students; many young mothers take the opportunity to educate themselves at the university while bringing up a family. The student profile at the university of Luton accords exactly with the groups of people to which the Government's policy to expand participation in higher education was, and continues to be, targeted.

The university of Luton's unique role in educating people to a high level for work is also recognised by the many world-class companies that operate from Luton. The university receives industrial support from, among others, Vauxhall Motors, Whitbread, Willmott Dixon, Barclays bank and National Westminster bank. Paid work placements are provided by 125 companies, and more than 100 companies support the university through the advisory, validation and quality assurance committees. Those companies would only part with their hard-earned cash and expertise to support an institution that was providing what they needed to help their businesses succeed.

On the basis of all that information, I contend that the university of Luton has more than played its part in ensuring the success of Government policy. Unfortunately, Luton, along with many of the so-called new universities—those that have come into existence in the past two years—are victims of their own success. I hasten to add that I do not believe that to be a result of Government policy, but because of the detailed workings of that policy that are dealt with outside the political arena.

As I am sure we are all aware, English universities receive funding from two main sources: course fees, and grants from the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the HEFCE. Course fees are administered by local education authorities and are the same for different types of courses, regardless of where they are studied. A band 2 student brings with him or her the same amount of funding whichever university he or she attends.

Until 1993, the fee income per student was high, and there was no capping limit. It was mainly through that mechanism that the increase in student numbers was achieved, because universities and colleges of higher education could afford to grow by taking on students on a fees-only basis. Luton college of higher education took full advantage of that opportunity and, by growing, was able to attain university status. When the Government's targets had been reached, the fees per student were reduced by more than a half, which had the effect of consolidating student numbers and increasing the importance of HEFCE funding.

Funding is allocated separately for research and teaching. There was much publicity not long ago when several well-known, traditionally research-based universities won their case to maintain their element of research funding. It is claimed that research funding and teaching funding are mutually exclusive. That contention should be challenged as, especially with band 2 subjects, there is no doubt that some so-called research facilities are used by both undergraduate and postgraduate students. I will not say more about that subject, as I wish to concentrate on the teaching element of HEFCE funding.

The funding for teaching is allocated according to a formula which should be fair and transparent—unfortunately, it is neither. Comparative analysis of HEFCE funding for teaching from one university to another is not easy, because different types of courses are funded differently, with band 1, humanities, funded at the lowest level and band 3, medical studies, funded at the highest level, with band 2 in between.

The use of the raw data of average unit council funding—where the total allocation for teaching is divided by the total number of students—is indicative of inequity in the system, and shows that something is not right. For example, in 1994, the amount of HEFCE funding allocated for teaching per full-time equivalent student in Luton was £1,532, compared with £2,336 for the university of Hertfordshire, and £2,850 for the university of York.

I am sure that the Minister will note that I have deliberately not included universities with medical schools in my figures in an attempt to compare like with like. In light of those figures, the question must be asked: why are students at the university of Luton each allocated £800 less than those at the university of Hertfordshire, which is located in the neighbouring county, and more than £1,300 less than in York, where costs are much lower?

As I have said, I accept that analysis of the raw data has its limitations, because of the differences in course mix from university to university. Therefore, I shall cite some figures calculated by Dr. Peter Knight, vice-chancellor of the university of Central England, which were published in *The Times Higher Educational Supplement* in January this year. Dr. Knight's figures take into account different course types by comparing the allocations over all subjects in all universities and analysing the funding for each subject at each university compared with the average.

Two features of Dr. Knight's analysis are particularly striking. First, the new universities that have rapidly increased their student numbers in recent years—such as Luton, Bournemouth, Anglia, Humberside and Derby—have exceptionally low allocations of HEFCE funding for teaching compared with other universities. Secondly, the new universities fare worse than the old universities in funding terms.

I could make conjecture about why that is the case; suffice it to say that a formula that can lead to Imperial college receiving £998 more per student than the university of Luton, even after allowing for subject mix, when the average funding for full-time students is £1,600, represents a huge variation. If the allocation for research is added to that for teaching, the variation becomes almost obscene. I believe that those variations are indefensible. They are a strong indication that the formula for allocating money to universities needs to be reviewed, with special reference to the proportion of the total funding allocated according to student numbers.

[Sir Graham Bright]

It is a credit to the new universities, such as Luton, that they are able to reach the required quality standards despite their relative underfunding, but that could lead to problems in the longer term. It will certainly not allow on-going investment in and further development of the new universities. In that context, it must be remembered that the new universities to which I am principally referring were colleges of higher education until very recently, and, as such, have historically been the poor relations of higher education compared with the old universities and with those colleges that became polytechnics in the 1970s.

Therefore, they start off at a low base with regard to equipment, facilities and spare cash for investment. They are, quite correctly, putting all their resources into maintaining the quality of their teaching and the teaching environment. However, it is essential that they receive a fairer slice of the cake if they are to maintain and develop their standards.

The HEFCE recognises that there are inequities in the formula, by applying harsher efficiency gains to the more generously funded universities. However, it is estimated that that method will take between 15 and 20 years to narrow the current range of funding for teaching to within 5 per cent. of the average. As an aside, I add that it is just as well the new universities did not take 15 to 20 years to respond to the Government's initiatives to increase student numbers, or we would still be a long way short of our target.

To add insult to injury, the recent allocations to universities incorporated a sum of £26.6 million across the whole higher education sector, under the heading "Non-Consolidated Core Funding". Those funds were originally allocated to fund growth, but as student numbers are now consolidating rather than expanding, the HEFCE decided to distribute the sum pro rata to core funds for teaching.

Therefore, there was money in the budget to allow the HEFCE to address the current inequity of funding, but it chose instead to reinforce that inequity. I simply cannot believe that that was in any way an informed decision, especially when one considers that the money was originally allocated for growth. Surely it would have been fairer to allocate the extra funds according to past growth, as the high-growth universities are the ones currently adversely affected by the funding formula.

The HEFCE was set up as an independent body to allocate funds to universities, and it is right that the Minister should be legally precluded from interfering in HEFCE allocations to individual universities. However, I believe that it is the Government's duty to ensure that all their policies are fair. Therefore, they would be within their rights to question the formula used by the HEFCE to allocate teaching funds, which obviously does not give enough weight to student numbers.

Modifying the formula for teaching in higher education to ensure that it is driven by student numbers would be entirely consistent with the Government's policies in other areas. The local management of schools formula for allocating budgets to schools must, by law, be at least 80 per cent. based on pupil numbers—and quite rightly so. The amount of money that a school requires is dependent mainly on the number of pupils who attend that school.

The health reforms have also ensured that money follows the patient, and thus have led to major improvements in the health care offered in areas such as Bedfordshire. It is simply wrong that the same principle does not apply to allocating teaching funds in the higher education sector, as the costs for teaching relate mainly to the number of students.

The Minister has already announced that he intends to review the HEFCE formula this summer in order to ensure that it is appropriate for the current period of consolidation. I trust that he will ensure that the review removes the current inequities in teaching funding—especially to those new universities which have more than played their part in increasing student numbers to the level required by the Government.

In conclusion, the expansion of participation rates in higher education must be considered one of the Government's greatest successes and a great achievement of which we should all be proud. Having increased student numbers to such unprecedented levels, we are now in a period of consolidation. I urge the Minister to take the opportunity presented by the review of the HEFCE formula to ensure that we have a formula that is fair, transparent and student driven and which thus allows all our universities—particularly the university of Luton—to go from strength to strength in the future.

1.16 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Further and Higher Education (Mr. Tim Boswell): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Sir G. Bright) for securing this opportunity to draw attention to the achievements of the university of Luton. I know that he and other hon. Members from Bedfordshire have taken a keen personal interest in the university's development.

I had the honour of speaking at the lunch to celebrate its inauguration as England's newest university in November 1993. I was pleased then, as I am now, to congratulate Luton on its remarkable progress from college to university in a relatively short period. I know that it is the result of a great deal of hard work. I recognise the university's academic achievements and its success in providing greater access to higher education along the lines mentioned by my hon. Friend.

He raises important questions about funding for the university of Luton and for universities and colleges in general. He correctly acknowledges that they are also connected to wider questions about the nature of the relationships between Ministers, the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the universities and colleges. I shall refer to those relationships before talking about funding specifically.

At the heart of the relationship between Ministers, the funding council and the universities and colleges are the principles of institutional independence and academic freedom. University autonomy is a central feature of our higher education system. It is protected in law. Ministers are barred by statute from interfering in funding allocations to individual institutions and from setting criteria for the admission of students, the selection of staff or the content of courses.

The Government set the overall level of public funding for higher education in light of what the country can afford, the higher education funding councils throughout

the United Kingdom distribute grants to institutions within the context of Government policy, and the institutions decide how those funds should be spent according to their own priorities. The system protects the independence of universities and colleges. It gives them the freedom to experiment and innovate, and to gear their provision to changing needs.

Therefore, the Government do not direct the higher education system; they provide a framework within which the providers of higher education can respond to the needs of users, and they also ensure that the sector receives a fair share of public funds, as my hon. Friend graciously acknowledged.

I am also grateful to him for highlighting the success of our higher education system and acknowledging the part played by public funds in helping to secure it. Higher education has been one of the fastest growing public expenditure programmes in recent years. Nearly £5 billion will be available to English universities and colleges in 1995-96 through funding council grant and tuition fees. Student support will add another £1.5 billion. That follows successive real-terms increases in funding.

The spending growth in public funds has been accompanied by rapid expansion in student numbers. As my hon. Friend said, participation of young people in higher education now stands at a record level of more than 30 per cent. and the number of mature students has risen dramatically. It is a remarkable achievement. That it has been accomplished with significant real improvements in productivity, while maintaining quality is a testament to the resourcefulness of our universities and colleges.

However, expansion has imposed significant demands on the taxpayer. It is now widely recognised that there is a limit to the amount which the taxpayer can be expected to pay for higher education. Against that background, we announced in the 1992 autumn statement a period of consolidation in student numbers.

Our current expenditure plans assume an increase of 22,000 full-time equivalent student numbers between 1994-95 and 1995-96 and provide for participation in higher education to be maintained at around 30 per cent. up to 1997-98. We have asked the HEFCE to ensure that those numbers are not exceeded, and it has decided to achieve that by setting maximum numbers of award holders for each institution.

Our expenditure plans for 1996-97 and beyond will be announced later this year in the 1995 Budget. For the longer term, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education has set in train a review of higher education which is considering issues relating to the purpose of higher education and its future size and shape. We have had more than 100 responses from different organisations to our consultation exercise earlier this year, and we are carefully analysing them all.

Within the overall funding provided by the Government, the HEFCE is responsible for distributing grant funds to different institutions. My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Education, the Member for Oxford, West and Abingdon (Mr. Patten), set out broad guidance to the HEFCE in 1992, when it was established. The guidance concentrated on the key aims which its funding methods should meet and the particular issues to take into account.

In short, those are to secure greater efficiency, to relate funding to quality, to maintain the diversity of missions of institutions and to secure stability of funding. Further guidance is given each year in an annual grant letter announcing the outcome of the public expenditure survey.

As my hon. Friend pointed out, however, Ministers do not seek to influence the detail of the funding council's funding methods or its allocations. Under the terms of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, while the Secretary of State for Education may attach terms and conditions to her grant to the HEFCE, they may not relate to the funding allocations to individual institutions.

The HEFCE has taken on responsibility for an enlarged higher education sector with a diverse range of institutions. It has worked hard, in consultation with universities and colleges, to develop funding mechanisms that reward efficiency, but secure as much stability as possible in funding year to year.

It is a measure of the HEFCE's success that those mechanisms have enabled the sector to adjust to the transition from expansion to consolidation without undue turbulence. That is particularly important in the current climate, as we are asking institutions to make continuing efficiency gains within tight budgets.

The HEFCE's funding method is applied to all institutions according to the same general principles, although individual institutions will, of course, have different allocations. Grant funding is mostly for research and teaching, although there is some non-formula funding for expenditure which cannot fit easily into a general funding formula. There is also capital funding. Nearly all the research funding is allocated by a formula which reflects quality ratings measured in periodic research assessment exercises.

The majority of the HEFCE's funds for teaching is allocated to a core which guarantees institutions a high percentage of the previous year's funding, provided that they recruit agreed student numbers. The average unit of council funding is calculated by reference to the previous core funding provided by the council and the number of students recruited by an institution. It is determined separately for each academic subject category, level of study and mode of attendance.

Institutions that have higher average units of funding will have higher annual efficiency gains applied to their core funding than those with lower average units of funding. The remainder of the funding council's funds for teaching is allocated to the margin, which is targeted on specific activities. Institutions which have lower efficiency gains will receive a proportionately larger share of formula-based allocations of marginal funding.

I believe that Dr. Peter Knight, in the article to which my hon. Friend referred, acknowledged the HEFCE's funding method for teaching to be even-handed between long-established institutions and new universities, and it noted that the level of grant funding for teaching that an institution receives from the HEFCE is related largely to its own decisions on student recruitment. I understand that the HEFCE has replied to Dr. Knight's article, pointing out that, in respect of the variations between institutions in the average units of council funding for the same subject, the option of providing the same funding for each subject to all institutions was rejected, following consultation with the institutions themselves.

[Mr. Tim Boswell]

Those, such as Luton, that have chosen to increase student numbers significantly in recent years will have lower average units of council funding but higher total levels of teaching funding, taking into account funding council grants and tuition fees, than would otherwise have been the case.

It is worth stressing that the funding council does not decide how universities and college run their own affairs. Institutions decide how to deploy their total public and private resources, in the light of their individual missions and their particular development plans. Whatever their decisions, all institutions must manage within the resources available to them.

In the current period of consolidation, the HEFCE is setting maximum numbers of awards for each institution in order to ensure that the sector does not exceed the student numbers for which we have provided in our expenditure plans. In setting maximum numbers, the funding council has taken account of the rate of in-built growth in student numbers within each institution. I accept that that will inevitably mean that some institutions will not be able to continue to expand as they may have wished, but I am sure that the House will appreciate the reasons for the decisions on public expenditure that underlie our current policy.

Equally, I appreciate the university of Luton's desire to secure the level of funding it believes it needs to pursue its plans, but, as I have explained, funding allocations to individual institutions are the responsibility of the HEFCE, not Ministers. It would not, therefore, be right for me to offer a view about the funding allocation to Luton or any other university or college. If any institution is unhappy with the funding it receives from the HEFCE, it should discuss the matter with the funding council.

I believe that the HEFCE's chief executive has met the vice-chancellor of Luton university and his colleagues on a number of occasions. The university will therefore have been able to make its case directly to the funding council. That is clearly the way forward, but I shall be happy to pass on the concerns expressed by my hon. Friend today to the council.

I should clarify that the council, not Ministers, is currently reviewing its funding methodology, and will be consulting institutions about its plans. The review is instigated and managed by the funding council itself. Naturally, institutions which favour particular changes of any kind will be able to express their views as part of the consultation process, and I hope that they will.

I hope that I have made clear that the financial position of each institution depends largely on its own decisions on recruitment and management, which is as it should be. Although I acknowledge my hon. Friend's interest in and enthusiasm for the university of Luton, Ministers have properly set the funding framework, but are not and should not be in the business of instructing the funding council, or of telling individual institutions how to run their affairs in their own circumstances, using the resources available to them.

Low Income Statistics

1.30 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): We go from hefty to low income statistics in one jump, if not in one move.

I am grateful for this opportunity to debate the Social Security Select Committee's reports on low income statistics. Given that the Under-Secretary is present, I hope that we may take the debate a few stages further. If it had been taking place 160 years ago, the Prime Minister would be in his seat on the Treasury Bench to initiate it. Robert Peel believed that one had to have not only a feel for politics but a passion to know what was happening in evolving Victorian Britain. He thought that it was a prime job of government to provide information on which politicians could make sensible decisions and that would provide the expanding electorate with a more informed view of policies debated in the Chamber. It is a double compliment to the Minister that the present Administration feel that he is a proper substitute for Robert Peel. Anybody who has been through the baptism of fire of the Child Support Agency knows of the respect and affection in which the House holds the Minister in respect of that and other topics.

On the Victorian theme, if one walks along the Library Corridor, one sees local government reports for every year. At the turn of each calendar year, reports were published by the House containing information on how the Poor Law was working. If there had been a set-to and a punch-up in the Peckham workhouse, the inquiry report would be included in the year's annual returns to the House. What people ate and their comings and goings to and from the Poor Law were faithfully recorded.

It is a strange indictment of our society, given how much we have invested in modern technology, that we probably know less about what is happening in our society than the Victorians knew about what was happening in theirs. That is a double disadvantage because we need a basis for rational debate, and society is again changing rapidly. One has only to look at the labour market and at fiscal and benefit policies to know that it is crucial to have an up-to-date picture of what is happening, so that policies can be shaped according to the real world, not according to the fantasy world that politicians, sadly, too often inhabit.

The budget for which the Minister and his colleagues are responsible is approaching £90,000 million and is the largest single item of Government expenditure. Although taxpayers have, until now, with not too grudging approval, agreed to those funds, they know as we do that one reason for spending £90,000 million is concern for people at the bottom of society. Under Harold Wilson's Government, an Administration began to collect data on low-income statistics. The frequency of their publication was increased so that, at the 1979 general election, those statistics made an annual appearance—albeit many years after the year to which they applied.

For reasons that I do not need to give, the Government decided to set aside that series of statistics and to introduce data on incomes below average earnings. The Select Committee took a different view and has continued at regular intervals to publish what would have been the low income statistics series, had the Government continued it. As I have commented before, the Government would have a better record to put before the electorate if they had stuck with the old series.

Both series are valuable, but that value is limited. Both provide a snapshot of people on low incomes at any one time. The information contained in the Government's official data on households having below-average incomes far exceeds that which we expected to gain from the low-income families data. Certain information given in the series set aside cannot be obtained from the data on households having below-average incomes. Although the Government publish information on the numbers of people below income support level who do not claim for reasons other than non-eligibility, the low-income series gives a much more comprehensive picture of the group that appears to be eligible and is not claiming and that which is below eligibility levels for income support but is not claiming for other reasons, such as ignorance of entitlement.

I hope that we shall spend most of our time debating not the old-fashioned snapshot approach but the urgency of obtaining information about what is happening to the same people over time. We have a lot of information about what is happening to groups at certain income levels over time, but not about whether the same people form those groups. If Robert Peel were participating in this debate, he would say that the Government are setting off with maps that are equivalent to those of the world drawn up by people who believed that it was flat, when what is needed are maps that take into account the fact that the world is round. Instead of having Brownie snapshots of income levels at any one time, we need a movie camera to keep a gaze on particular groups over time.

In the 1970s, the new earnings survey was used to provide such information. In one particular year, the lowest decile was taken out and that group was followed for the next five years. Of course, some people were lost from the survey, and at the end of the five years it was not complete. However, we learned that it was wrong to think that, because someone is poor or on a low income now, he will be in the same position next year—let alone in five years' time. The new earnings survey showed an enormous movement of people up the income scale. Some people bounced up from the bottom to the second-from-top decile in the space of five years.

Part of the emphasis in this debate should be on calling attention to the importance of data that look at the same people over time. One is grateful to the Institute for Fiscal Studies for producing such data recently, showing that the poor form not a homogeneous group, but one that varies. There is a flip side to the cheerful news that that brings to the Government, who can rightly point out that, at any one time, the poor are not the same group. Of most concern to the House is the group in the snapshot that remain poor over a long period.

I wish to make two pleas. First, under the old supplementary benefit system, returns were made which showed us how many people claimed benefit not only for one or two years, but for three, four, five, 10 and 15 years, and more. Since the introduction of income support, there have been no equivalent data. Instead, there has been a grouping of everyone who has claimed for more than two years. Is it possible to include additional information in our returns on income support?

I move on to my second plea. I congratulate the Government on the family resources survey, which will begin our movie camera approach to what is happening to poorer people and richer people, but surely we should have regard to the three great cohort studies that were initiated after the war, in 1946, 1958 and 1970. We should ascertain to what extent we can build on to their retrieval of information, given that there is still contact with most of the people in each of the samples. There are questions that I would like to be answered.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I know that my intervention will go slightly beyond the focus of the debate. Would it not be a good idea for the Government to consider establishing a framework of successive cohort studies every seven years, whether in the United Kingdom or throughout the European Union, with a return every seven years, so that we are aware of changes within the changing picture?

Mr. Field: The cohort studies were initiated by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, who for a long time was a Member of Parliament. If he were still alive—sadly, he is not—there might have been some follow-up studies consequent on the 1970 study. I agree with the point made by the hon. Gentleman.

We need desperately to know by what exits people leave benefit and gain work. If they gain work, is it full-time or part-time? If it is part-time work, is that what they wanted or did they want more? If they get a part-time job, are they able soon to move up the rungs to a full-time job? If that full-time job is a low-paid one, how do they get themselves into much better paid positions within the same firm or another firm?

There is a great need for answers to the questions that I have posed. There may be exits from poverty which we have not considered and which we need to encourage once we have the relevant information. There is an obvious place at which to start, and it is not the new study that the Government have commissioned, on which I congratulate them. We should make the maximum use of the three cohort studies which were initiated in the earlier post-war period, which could begin to answer the questions that I have asked.

1.42 pm

Mr. Malcolm Wicks (Croydon, North-West): I shall make only a brief speech, because I am anxious to hear the Minister's response to the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field).

I am struck by the fact that social security expenditure is at record levels. Yet one of the major worries in British society is what might be called social insecurity. Paradoxically, there is an equation between social security expenditure and social insecurity. Pensions and child benefit, within the social security budget, provide evidence of social security. Much of the rest of that budget—for example, expenditure on unemployment and expenditure through income support on one-parent families—is, in a sense, evidence of insecurity in society.

One of the difficulties for Ministers in the Department of Social Security, whether now or in future, is assessing the forces within our economy and society that make for social insecurity. It is their task to determine the best way in which to attack some of those forces. That challenge points to policies within the public sector that are often the province of Departments other than the Department of Social Security.

It is my plea that there should be a coherent approach to family policy. As a new member of the Select Committee on Social Security, it strikes me that, while

[Mr. Malcolm Wicks]

some of the data on low incomes are available because of factors that are well known, especially unemployment, increasingly family poverty wears a newer face. Much of that poverty is the result of the growth of one-parent families. Whatever we say about that growth, we should all be concerned that there is almost an equation between one-parent families and poverty.

We know that seven of every 10 one-parent families depend on income support. Of the never-married single parents with children—they constitute one of the most vulnerable and fastest-growing groups—85 per cent. are on income support. Our expenditure on income support is very much a symptom of insecurity and family breakdown. One of the great challenges in social policy is to determine how we should start to shift resources away from breakdown—in other words, spending on breakdown—to investing in families on income support.

We have heard something about data, and the relevant reports are full of data. They relate to millions of children within families on income support or with incomes just above that level. I shall mention a one-parent family who came to see me at my surgery—a young woman of 21 years with a two-year-old boy. The mother and her child are entirely dependent on the state in the sense that they have a local authority flat—it is a pretty poor one that is badly heated—and are on income support. The child has asthma and it is often necessary for the mother to call in the national health service. That family is an example of great dependency on the state.

The family I have described, and many others like it, are costing the country dear. The nation is contributing billions of pounds to assist vulnerable families. At the same time, the standard of living of the individual family to whom I have referred is extremely poor. I was especially concerned because the mother has great ambitions. She told me that she did not want to be on income support. She wants a job. She told me that she wanted to be a traffic warden. That is a brave decision, given Croydon's traffic circumstances. She told me of her idea and she wanted support to help her secure that job.

I replied, "When you deal with the Department of Social Security or any other Government agency, has anyone talked to you about your ambition, including the training that you might need to become a traffic warden or to take on another job? Has anyone discussed with you child care implications?" Sadly, the answer was no. That was partly because, being on income support, she did not have to report for work. There was no requirement that she should search for work. Under the current system, there was no package of training, advice about child care or counselling.

When the Minister replies, I hope that he will take up the wider aspects of social security and tell us when, at last, the Government will get to grips with family policy.

1.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Alistair Burt): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on securing the debate. Over about 15 minutes we have ranged extremely wide, from Sir Robert Peel through to pleas for a coherent family policy. There has been reference to lone families and statistics. As the House knows, I could cheerfully debate each item for far longer than 15 minutes. I shall do my best to confine my response.

I make no claim to be Sir Robert Peel. I do, however, come from the same place as Sir Robert. We are both from Bury in Lancashire, where Sir Robert's tower still stands overlooking the town. He is remembered with great affection and his statue is in the town square to celebrate what he did in terms of the corn laws and feeding the people. He is especially well remembered.

I welcome the opportunity to debate and to discuss low income statistics. As the hon. Member for Birkenhead said, it is vital that we have reliable and up-to-date information about those on low incomes. It is important that we are able to identify which groups on low income are most at risk and the circumstances that produce those risks. There has been a variety of statistics. Probably the most well known of the current statistics is that set which is known as households below average income. Those statistics provide us with the overview that we now use. The statistics are not used alone. I shall be making reference to other studies and talking about other information that we can use. I hope that my remarks will be helpful to the hon. Gentleman and to the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Wicks)—I have in mind especially his final remarks.

It is, of course, entirely within the aim of government to have as coherent a family and social policy as possible, bearing in mind the complexity of family structure now, and particularly the change in relation to lone parenthood, which we have discussed a number of times in this place.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming the report from the board of social responsibility of the Church of England? Unlike the headlines in the papers—broadsheet and tabloid—and reports from the BBC, that report accurately says that four out of five children are brought up by two-parent families, that two thirds of lone parent families were not single parents to begin with and that, by having respect for families and for family responsibilities, and by building up their confidence and their competence, we are likely to have fewer people falling into the low income statistics, and more coming out faster.

Mr. Burt: I welcome the analysis that is contained in the report, of which I have read something. I do not necessarily agree with all its conclusions and I do not necessarily agree with its failure to promote a particular form of family as the ideal. The report is right to look at the complexity of family life today. It is right to seek an end to condemnation, but one can look forward to an ideal of family structure without necessarily condemning those who are on their way towards it.

To remove completely the aim and aspiration of a married relationship does not seem correct to me, but that is a matter for the Church, and no doubt we shall be hearing much more about that. Its attempt to analyse, and to supplement the analysis of, the complexity of family life that we have today is extremely relevant and it attempts to deal with the world as it is. It is the Government's job to deal with the world as it is and families as they are, but, if it is anyone's job to say where they would like the world to be and where they would like people to be, I believe that it is for Christians and for the Church to make a statement in relation to that as well.

The households below average income statistics are based on the family expenditure survey. It looks at the incomes of individuals on the assumption that each person shares the total income of the household. Using that information, it estimates the pattern of incomes of the United Kingdom and how it changes over time.

The HBAI provides information on how individuals fare, relative to their counterparts in the year of analysis, by looking at the number of individuals below various fractions of average income. It also allows comparisons to be made with earlier time periods by looking at numbers of individuals below fixed income thresholds. Income growth is estimated for the population, broken down by position in the income distribution, economic and family types. Information on who makes up the low income groups is also provided.

Over recent years, the HBAI has also included information on those with above-average incomes. This provides a complete picture of the changing income distribution. It is an evolving analysis that seeks to shed new light on aspects of income distribution, but it does suffer from the problem of being a snapshot. I shall say a little about longitudinal studies in a moment. I shall outline briefly some of the results from the latest edition, which bear some repetition. They were more positive than negative. The results show that the average income of British households has risen by around 38 per cent. Increases were not confined to a few top earners. The average income of all family types reported on in the HBAI has increased.

Pensioners have fared particularly well—the average income of pensioner couples, after housing costs, has increased by 53 per cent. in real terms. There are also far fewer pensioners in the bottom 10 per cent. of the income distribution—only 8 per cent., compared to 31 per cent. in 1979. It is also encouraging to note that average income has increased for the unemployed and for those in full-time work on low pay.

Income has increased for the majority of the working population, although there continues to be a dispersion of earnings, probably reflecting a shift towards skilled labour and an improvement in labour market flexibility. Even the least well-off have been able to improve their living standards, as various studies showing the increase in consumer durables among the bottom 20 per cent. have shown over time. However, the results for the lowest income group need to be interpreted carefully—I think that the House understands that better than some analysts outside—particularly those for the bottom 10 per cent. of the income distribution.

There are two important considerations, of which the first is changes in composition. An increase in the number of people reporting low incomes can affect the average income of the bottom decile and cause an apparent reduction, even where incomes are higher than those of individuals in a similar position in 1979. Changes in employment are especially important there. Since 1992, unemployment has fallen by nearly 600,000, but the snapshot of society at the time that the statistics were compiled naturally reflects the higher unemployment figure then, and the number of people reporting low incomes, especially the self-employed, has had its impact.

Secondly, incomes are not always a reliable indicator of true living standards for lower income groups. Of course, the bottom decile includes many people on low incomes and correspondingly low living standards, but it also includes, especially at the very bottom, many people, often self-employed, reporting very low incomes but with relatively high expenditure. The number of self-employed reporting zero or negative incomes has increased significantly. However, of the 150,000 self-employed reporting no income, around 60 per cent spend more than the average for the population as a whole.

That casts some doubt on the bottom decile statistics, particularly in relation to those who are in occupations where reporting a lower income than one might have is rather an advantage. The bottom decile spends more than the second decile and, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the expenditure of the bottom income decile, after housing costs, has risen by about 30 per cent. since 1979.

I now come to the longitudinal studies, and I pay tribute to the IFS work. When individual fortunes are followed through, a different picture emerges from the snapshot. Recent work, again by the IFS, shows that up to a half of those in the bottom tenth of the income distribution in 1991 had left it by the following year, and for those who had left, income rose by 45 per cent. Even among those who remained, income rose slightly over the year. That research, therefore, tells us what the snapshot does not: the poor are not, as they are so often portrayed, a stagnant group with gradually declining living standards. It also shows that, over relatively short periods, there is a significant movement into and out of the lowest decile of the income distribution.

We are, as the hon. Member for Birkenhead has pointed out, very aware of the need to complement analyses like the HBAI with information about how the position of individuals changes over time. I hope that some details about our current programme of research will be of help to the hon. Gentleman and the House.

The Department's current programme of research includes a number of projects, both longitudinal and cross-sectional. First, analysis of the British household panel survey continues. It is a longitudinal study of a nationally represented sample of more than 5,000 households in Great Britain and involves an annual survey of each adult member in the household, making a total of more than 10,000 individual interviews.

The aim is to collect and analyse evidence of the experiences of a representative panel of the British population over a number of years, to improve our understanding of the incidence, pattern, duration, interrelation and impact of everyday issues and experiences and to examine how individuals, families and households confront them. That is precisely the information that the hon. Member for Croydon, North-West was looking for to deal with some of the complex situations that arrive in our surgeries every day.

Secondly, work based around the national child development study continues. That longitudinal study follows the lives of all those living in Great Britain who were born between 3 and 9 March 1958. It was started by the National Children's Bureau, which carried out a follow-up survey of the 16,500 people in that group when the children reached age seven in 1965, and continued with further surveys at ages 11, 16 and 23. The most recent wave was conducted by the City university in 1991, when the respondents were aged 33.

We clearly intend to incorporate that information, including the information that I mentioned earlier by the IFS, into our work over time. As we get more information, we shall bring that in.

[Mr. Burt]

The new earnings survey panel was mentioned earlier. I am glad to say that the longitudinal data from it are becoming available and provide similar information on the mobility of earnings to that available from another source, but the survey has a less full coverage than information from contribution records, which are already being investigated at the hon. Gentleman's request. I am sure that he will be pleased to hear that we intend to use information from national insurance contributions records to track changes in circumstances. A database is being developed that will show the employment history of a representative sample of adults. The importance of employment patterns in changing incomes suggests that that data will provide valuable insights.

All that will provide us with a wealth of valuable data, but data alone will not help those who are on a low income. The important point is to identify the main causes of low income and to take positive action to help people to improve their circumstances. The clear message from the HBAI and from other information we have is that the rise in unemployment, changes in the labour market, and particularly the widening distribution of earnings, have had a major impact on the distribution of incomes. Another significant factor has been the increase in the number of families with children becoming unemployed or dependent on social security benefits.

From information, anecdotal and based on survey, the Government have deduced that getting people back into work is the very best thing that we can do for those who are relatively poor. Hence all the work that has been done in recent years—the improvements in family credit, with changes in hours and disregards, and the work done to reduce national insurance contributions at the lowest level—and the work being done—in October 1996, an in-work benefit for single people and couples with children will be piloted, and the back-to-work bonus will be introduced in October 1996. All those measures aim to bring people back into work.

We shall therefore continue to use the information on low income statistics to do the job that Governments should do best—that is, to ensure that people move out of poverty and into a position where they can be truly self-sufficient, contributing not only to their own self-esteem but to society at large.

East Jerusalem

2 pm

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): I am grateful to have this opportunity to discuss important events concerning the Holy City during the month of May. I am grateful, too, to my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office for coming along to reply to this brief debate. Its purpose, of course, is to give him the chance to give the House an account of the Government's response to those events and to give us his thoughts on where we all go from here.

The House knows only too well that east Jerusalem was conquered by the Israeli army in 1967 from the Arabs and has therefore been occupied territory since that date; thus, it comes under the fourth Geneva convention of 1948.

Occupied territory is a temporary phenomenon. I am just as opposed to other countries conquering and occupying by force of arms other people's territory against the wishes of their populations in 1995 as was my father's generation in western Europe in 1940-41. It is to me desperately important that the occupying power behaves impeccably. Alack, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will be well aware that that has not been the case in east Jerusalem.

A few weeks ago, led by, I believe, the outspoken mayor of Jerusalem, Mr. Olmert, the Israeli Government decided to acquire 131 acres of Arab-owned land in east Jerusalem. There is some dispute about whether it was all Arab-owned land, but I think that the Foreign Office broadly accepts that figure.

Undoubtedly, the intention has been for some time to reduce the Arab population of east Jerusalem, to build them out and to have de facto annexation of Greater Jerusalem. Undoubtedly also, the intention is thus to ensure that east Jerusalem is never the capital of an independent and sovereign state of Palestine.

That is incredibly foolish. I think that the Israeli public—the majority of whom apparently go along with that policy—have totally misunderstood the resentment that any such policy, if carried out to the full, would bring to the area.

There was an interesting letter in *The Independent* on 20 May written by supporters of the International Campaign for Jerusalem. It said:

> "Whatever piece of paper Mr. Arafat may be cajoled into signing, and whatever our individual views, the Palestinian, Arab and Muslim worlds will never accept the permanent loss of Jerusalem . . . What Israel and the US now seem bent on doing is to condemn Jew and Arab to relentless conflict for final domination."

Those are rather grim words.

The matter was appropriately brought before the United Nations Security Council. Alack, Madeleine Albright, the US permanent representative in New York, on behalf of the Clinton Administration, cast a veto over the resolution being proposed. That resolution was based on six other Security Council resolutions going back as far as 1968.

The ambassador said that the words went too far. On the contrary, it was a mild resolution in the rather heated circumstances. It called on the Israeli Government to rescind the seizing of the 131 acres and called on them to desist taking any such action in the future.

The Americans have done this before. They have been the big friend of Israel when it has run into trouble with the international community. But I hope that the House

will take grave exception to the veto that was cast. It was, after all, President Clinton who basked in the glory of that famous White House ceremony when he persuaded a slightly reluctant Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to shake hands with Mr. Yasser Arafat. How can the Americans now be regarded as fair referees between Arab and Jew after that veto?

Going beyond the middle east, there is the basic matter of international law. If we do not have international law, we have international anarchy. We have illegal acts, including terrorism, and we have a rule of might is right. I cannot believe that the United States Administration would for a moment wish to support those particular activities.

You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, under that declaration of principles between the Palestinians and the Israeli Government, the ultimate status of Jerusalem was deferred until next year. That was appropriate. But to make a very obvious point, it is totally wrong for the Israeli Government, having reached that agreement with the Palestinians, then to try to change the fundamentals by building the Arab population out of east Jerusalem. That is deceitful and disgraceful and I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will declare that that is his view, too.

Where do we go from here? Mr. Rabin faced a potentially humiliating defeat in the Knesset. The Arab and communist parties and the Likud party joined forces and there was a real danger of his Government going down. Therefore, reluctantly, he decided not to go ahead with that seizure of Arab land. There were general words that such activity would not take place in the future. I hope that the Minister will give us some guidance. To what have the Israelis committed themselves on that point?

I have seen nothing, and no one has brought to my attention any reports, to show that Mr. Rabin thought that he had made a terrible mistake in going ahead with the seizure of Arab land but realised that he had badly treated his partners on the Arab side. Think of the position of King Hussein of Jordan, who has reached a separate agreement with Israel. He was facing a deep crisis at home in his domestic politics. Think of the position of Egypt or Syria. Both countries either have or may well have in the future very close relationships with Israel.

Will it be possible for the Palestinians and the Israelis to reach a final decision on the future of Jerusalem? We hope so. Many years ago, the late Lord Caradon wrote a pamphlet in which he suggested that Jerusalem should become an international city. When he gave me that pamphlet, I was not convinced, but as time has passed—although I am well aware that any such idea is anathema to both Jew and Arab—I have decided that it may provide the answer. Perhaps the problem could be kicked into touch for 50 years until relations between countries such as Israel, Jordan and Syria are on an even keel. The alternative, a continual row over Jerusalem, could prove extremely dangerous.

I am not entirely happy about leaving negotiations to the elected Government of Israel on one side and the Palestinian National Authority on the other. First, the balance is clearly unfair; secondly, the international community must be involved. Of course the 183 countries in the United Nations have views on the future of Jerusalem: it is not just a local middle east issue. How can my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister ensure that international pressure is brought to bear on the future of the Holy City?

2.11 pm

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): I thank the hon. Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) for allowing me to speak. The Conservative and Labour middle east councils have worked together for some years to help both the Palestinians and the Israelis to solve their problems through dialogue, but we have been increasingly frustrated by the American Government's determination to favour one side throughout the long, sorry process. The Israeli Government's veto of the Security Council resolution prompted us to engage in this short debate.

From the outset—ever since the signing of the Oslo agreement—hon. Members have supported the Palestinians and Israelis who have committed themselves to the diplomatic peace process. Today's debate is important, but its usefulness or otherwise will depend on whether we can establish a suitable approach to the central and sensitive question of Jerusalem. I am anxious to hear the Minister's response.

A meeting between the Labour, Conservative and Liberal middle east councils and a representative of the American embassy was recently called to discuss the American veto of the Security Council resolution. We were anxious to impress on the American representative the importance that we attach to international law—which was mentioned by the hon. Member for Bexleyheath—in the search for a successful outcome to the middle east peace process. That applies particularly to the question of Jerusalem and its status as an international city under international law.

As recent events have demonstrated, controversy over the Israeli development of Jerusalem in defiance of international law poses unacceptable risks to the peace process. The purpose of the international consensus on the status of the city was to avoid such circumstances. The law governing Jerusalem provides a holding position pending negotiations and agreement on a final settlement; importantly, it also provides the best way of shoring up faith and confidence in the diplomatic peace process during these difficult times.

During a symposium organised by the Conservative and Labour middle east councils in London in 1992 to discuss the role of international law in the context of the peace process, Dr. Rashid Khalidi made precisely that point. He said that the failure of Israel and the international community to implement the principles of international law

"daily brings home to the Palestinian population under occupation their powerlessness, as well as the fact Israel is unrestrained by any external power or law, and that even the super-power sponsor of the negotiating process is unwilling or unable to restrain Israel from such violations, despite the duty to do so as a co-signatory to the Fourth Geneva Convention. This in turn reinforces the profound scepticism among the Palestinian population regarding this negotiating process, which in turn is grist to the mill of the minority opposed in principle to the process."

As the hon. Member for Bexleyheath said, the declaration of principles—which we are anxious to see fully implemented—was clearly constructed in such a way as to leave the most sensitive and complex issues until the final stages of the negotiations. One of the main reasons for our concern about the Israelis' attempt to continue the annexation of land that is in dispute—particularly land in the Jerusalem area—is that it puts pressure on the peace process.

[Mr. Ernie Ross]

It is encouraging that Israel backed down in the face of international opposition to its recent plan to expropriate more land in east Jerusalem, despite the US veto of the proposed UN Security Council resolution condemning such a land grab. There are those—including people in Washington—who say that this is a bilateral process in which we, as an international community, must not interfere. I say that support for international law—and, indeed, for the United States' own letter of assurances sent to the Palestinians before the Madrid peace process began in 1991, stating that neither side should do anything on the ground to prejudice the final outcome of the talks—can only promote progress in the bilateral process involving Israel and the PLO. Only yesterday, there were signs of progress in the Cairo talks, with an unexpected number of additional powers being offered to the Palestinian National Authority.

All that augurs well for an agreement on redeployment by the 1 July deadline. It is crucial for the House to send a clear signal of support for the conduct of Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in the spirit and practice of reconciliation rather than against a background of confrontation, whether in Jerusalem, Gaza or the west bank.

2.16 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath (Mr. Townsend) and the hon. Member for Dundee, West (Mr. Ross) on raising this issue. They both have considerable experience and knowledge of the subject, and, as it happens, they nearly always agree. I shall try to respond to their specific points.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath began by reciting the recent history of a very ancient city. He is, of course, right to say that the fourth Geneva convention applies. He emphasised the importance of an occupying power's compliance with the convention, and I entirely agree. That is fundamentally important, and from time to time we have made precisely the same point to the Israeli Government.

My hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Dundee, West also focused on the Israeli Government's recent decision to expropriate 130-odd acres of land in and around east Jerusalem. My hon. Friend advanced the arguments against that expropriation very clearly. The British Government regarded the decision as a serious development; let me make it plain that we consider the settlements in the occupied territories in east Jerusalem to be illegal, and also to constitute a serious obstacle to any peace settlement.

The decision to expropriate was roundly condemned by the international community, and the United Kingdom joined—and joins—in that condemnation. I very much welcome the decision by the Israeli Cabinet not to proceed with the expropriation. I very much hope that that proposal is not brought forward again at any time in the future.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexleyheath stated rightly that the status of east Jerusalem is to be left to the end of the negotiations. I believe that it is right that it should be left to the end of the negotiations. I know that there has been a tendency, especially by the Palestinian negotiators, to seek to bring forward the question of the status of east Jerusalem to an earlier stage. I believe that such an approach would be an error and it is certainly inconsistent with the declaration of principles.

The plain fact is that an agreement on the status of east Jerusalem is going to be extraordinarily difficult to achieve. I do not believe that it is possible to achieve such an agreement unless substantial agreement is achieved on all the other matters. Therefore, I hope that all the parties to the negotiations will be ready and willing to stand by the principles already agreed and leave the status of east Jerusalem until the end.

I hope very much that it will possible to approach that question of status from the point of view that east Jerusalem should be made a focus for reconciliation rather than a subject of continuing conflict. I do not see how that is going to be achieved unless all the parties to the negotiations accept that a way has to be found of sharing Jerusalem. Quite what that way is, it seems to me, is not something for a British Minister to seek to identify in advance. It is a matter for negotiation by the parties to the negotiations.

I am absolutely clear in my own mind that it is wrong to seek to pre-empt any conclusion that might otherwise be possible by, for example, creating facts on the ground. Against that background, I certainly condemn any attempt to extend settlements in or around east Jerusalem. I say, too, to the Palestinians that they must not seek to pre-empt the decision in any way.

I am aware of the view of the Israeli Government that sharing Jerusalem will not be possible, that they are willing to provide access to the holy places but cannot go beyond that. That view is, of course, felt throughout the Likud, but is also a view expressed by almost all the Ministers in the present Israeli Government. My own belief is that such an approach will not provide the basis for a long-term, sustainable agreement.

I think that, if we are to see a settlement that will satisfy Palestinians and Arabs, it is going to have to be on the basis of some sharing of Jerusalem that goes beyond merely allowing access to holy places. As I say, it is not for a British Minister to seek to identify any particular model, but it is for us to commend the principles to those who participate in the negotiations, and that we will do.

The hon. Member for Dundee, West concluded his speech by referring to elections and redeployment. I share his view that this is a matter of enormous importance. I hope that it will be possible to come to an agreement around July on elections within the occupied territories and a redeployment of the Israeli defence forces away from residential areas or, at least, away from the most sensitive ones.

If the Palestinian authority is to have the kind of legitimacy that both we and, more important, the Israelis wish to see—and, which, of course, the Palestinians wish to see—it must be underpinned by an election. In the absence of an election, that authority will not have the kind of authority and legitimacy that it requires to carry through the rather difficult decisions that it has to carry through.

It was partly this thinking that caused the Prime Minister to offer that the European Union should seek to co-ordinate the observing and monitoring of those elections. I am glad to say that the principle of that has been accepted and we see a fixed agreement to carry out the redeployment and to carry forward the elections as being a critical phase in the process of securing a final agreement. The European Union and the British Government in particular will seek to do all that they can to reinforce that part of this process.

2.25 pm

Sitting suspended.

2.30 pm

On resuming—

It being half past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, pursuant to Order [19 December].

PRIVATE BUSINESS

QUEEN MARY AND WESTFIELD COLLEGE BILL

Order for Third Reading read.

To be read the Third time tomorrow.

Oral Answers to Questions

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Belize

1. **Mr. Davidson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the security arrangements devised to safeguard the independent future of Belize. [25429]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): Belize is an independent country within the Commonwealth. Since 1 January 1994, Belize has had responsibility for its own defence.

Mr. Davidson: Having withdrawn British troops from Belize, are the Minister and the Government satisfied that sufficient arrangements are in place to ensure that the territorial integrity of Belize is safe in the event of any external aggression? In particular, are there arrangements in place which will assist Belize in the event of substantial illegal migration affecting the territorial integrity of that state?

Mr. Davis: The Government do not believe that a renewed military threat is likely. The Guatemalan Government have made clear their intention to resolve their disputes peacefully through negotiation.

As to the ability to cope without the support of British forces, we agreed with the Government of Belize that the British garrison should be reduced to a training presence and that the Belize defence force would assume responsibility, as I said, on 1 January 1994. We have made it clear that we shall maintain our programme of assistance for the development of the BDF to sustain and improve the force's capability through the provision of loaned service personnel, equipment, training and advice. In addition, Belize continues to receive substantial amounts of British aid.

Mr. Jacques Arnold: One possible cause of instability in that area is, of course, the run-up to the presidential elections in Guatemala in October. Will my hon. Friend assure the House that he will make it clear to the Guatemalans that any playing with Belize would be extremely unhelpful because that country is a member of the United Nations and the Commonwealth and would get our full backing, and that we should like to see our warm relations with Guatemala extended and developed?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend, as ever, asks a wise question about Latin American affairs. We have maintained good relationships with Belize and Guatemala. Guatemala is clear about our stance with respect to Belize, and I think that that had a sizeable influence on their current position on the matter.

EU Council of Ministers

2. **Mr. Barnes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals his Department has to increase the transparency of decision-making in the European Union Council of Ministers; and if he will make a statement. [25432]

Mr. David Davis: We will continue to press for more transparency in the Council's decision-making, building on the principles agreed during the United Kingdom presidency.

Mr. Barnes: In democracies, formal legislative decisions are made by Parliaments, with full details provided of their votes and the state of Bills and amendments. This place is full of volumes of documents listing such material, yet the Council of Ministers, which is effectively the Parliament of Europe, meets in secret and all we get from it are its final directives and decisions and, occasionally, a final vote, if a vote happens to take place. Is not there a long way to go before transparency, meeting democratic requirements, is introduced into the Council of Ministers?

Mr. Davis: The United Kingdom is interested in all practical improvements which command broad support in the Council. The hon. Gentleman does not give credit where credit is due. The achievements so far include routine publication of votes, wider public access to Commission and Council documents, full briefing of the press before and after meetings of the Council and some Council sessions being held in public and televised.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is not this House a good place to start in achieving real accountability of the European Union Council of Ministers? In that context, could not my hon. Friend have come back from the ministerial meeting at Messina and made a statement to the House about the preparations for the intergovernmental conference? The stand that he took at Messina was welcome, and he should never fear to stand alone.

Mr. Davis: I thank my hon. Friend for that compliment. Throughout the course of the next six months, there will be some 15 meetings of the reflections group and I shall ensure that a clear account of what I say at those meetings will be given in a written answer.

Rwanda

3. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he last met his European Union counterparts regarding the situation in Rwanda; and if he will make a statement. [25433]

4. **Ms Janet Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the situation in Rwanda. [25434]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): Rwanda has been discussed on a regular basis in the European Union, most recently at the Development Affairs Council on 1 June attended by my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Chalker.

Mr. Enright: Since we beatified the blessed Baroness Chalker yesterday, I would not wish to canonise her today. Although I congratulate Her Majesty's Government on the efforts that they have made in the European Union, in spite of quite disgraceful opposition, to continue to support Rwanda in the way that it is being supported, may I urge on them the necessity of taking to task the French Government for continuing to supply arms outside Rwanda to parties to the conflict and ask the Government to consult about that in the European Union?

In the context of Lomé, will the Government also take to task Zaire and South Africa who—equally—are supplying arms outside Rwanda to parties to the conflict?

Mr. Baldry: I am always grateful for the hon. Gentleman's congratulations. I am grateful that he has recognised that we have been taking a constructive role in trying to find a way forward for the resumption of sensible EU aid to Rwanda. Indeed, we have been taking a leading part in that effort. I hope that full resumption of EU aid will be possible in the very near future. Of course, in a situation such as that in Rwanda, armed groups wandering around the place do not help anyone. Certainly it behoves everyone in the international community to try to ensure that everyone behaves responsibly, supports the efforts of the United Nations Secretary-General and of peacekeepers in the region and does nothing else which may undermine the peace process taking place in Rwanda.

Ms Anderson: Does the Minister accept that reconciliation can be achieved only when those responsible for the genocide are brought to justice? Does he also accept that the identity of the ringleaders is widely known, as is their whereabouts? What pressure are the Government putting on African Governments to see that those war criminals are brought to justice?

Mr. Baldry: I do not think that there is any disagreement that those who committed grave breaches of international humanitarian law should be brought to account for their actions. That is exactly the reason why the United Kingdom Government sponsored the Security Council resolution establishing an international criminal tribunal for Rwanda. As the hon. Lady says, bringing such people to trial is an essential pre-condition for efforts of reconciliation. We have been supporting the tribunal with funds and it will soon start its work. We clearly hope that, in the not too distant future, those who were responsible for some of the earlier atrocities will be brought to trial and to book, which will be part of the reconciliation process in Rwanda.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: Returning to the question of arms and the arms embargo, is the Minister aware that human rights organisations such as Human Rights Watch are concerned about the fact that arms are getting to former members of the Rwandan armed forces in refugee camps outside Rwanda? The suggestion is that Governments, individuals and organisations in France, South Africa and Zaire are actively involved in that process. Will the Minister and the Government, in supporting the retention of the United Nations role in Rwanda, press for the UN to have monitoring powers not only inside Rwanda but outside, to ensure that arms do not get through to would-be combatants? If that does not happen, we face the prospect of a return to intertribal conflict and the resumption of the genocide that the world saw last year.

Mr. Baldry: I think that I answered that point fairly fully in reply to the hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) and there is nothing else that I can say on the subject. The facts speak for themselves. We have been determined to try to ensure that there is the maximum number of international and UN monitors, and we have been among the foremost nations in helping to fund those monitors, outside as well as inside Rwanda. That will make a considerable contribution, because what is going on will be more widely known.

EU Reflections Group

5. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the main items in his briefing instructions to the Minister of State as the United Kingdom representative for the start of the EU reflections group proceedings this month. [25435]

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Douglas Hurd): The Prime Minister set out the Government's approach to the intergovernmental conference in his speech in Leiden, and in the House on 1 March. That is the basis on which the Minister of State will operate in the study group. The study group is designed to prepare options for the conference; the start of the IGC itself is at least seven months away.

Mr. Dykes: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. Does he agree that a normal enthusiasm for the European Union does not reduce our ability to look after our own vital national interests? Quite the reverse, it enhances that ability. In that context, will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Minister of State will be as enthusiastic as he is about our membership, and will not be like Mr. Bretherton at the original Messina conference?

Mr. Hurd: We want to make a success of British membership of the European Union, and that means that in preparing for the IGC there are certain specific things that we aim to achieve and to persuade others to achieve, and certain other things that we say that we shall not do, and would not accept if others put them forward. That is the line that my hon. Friend has begun to set out in the reflections group, and it will continue through the IGC.

Mr. Spearing: Will the Foreign Secretary confirm that under the existing treaty of union signed at Maastricht the obligation to change or even to review the existing treaty is extremely limited? Can he tell us where any obligation to change is listed, if it is listed at all? Anything wider than that on the wide topic that has been the subject of many documents is not an obligation under the existing treaty. Indeed, it is outwith the terms, so is it not therefore optional for all members of the Union?

Mr. Hurd: No member state can be compelled to accept any change in the Maastricht treaty. That treaty foreshadowed certain subjects that would need to be considered again, but it did not impose an obligation on any member state to accept any change.

Mr. Marlow: Does my right hon. Friend think that there is any real point in proceeding with the meetings of the reflections group at this stage, when the Chancellor of the Federal German Republic has made it clear that he will not agree with any decisions coming out of the IGC until after our general election, when he fervently hopes that the Labour party will be in power and will give him everything that he wants?

Mr. Hurd: Despite the blandishments of the Leader of the Opposition when he spoke in Bonn recently, I have the rather strong impression that that is not the Federal Chancellor's view. However, the British people will make the decision. We are entirely relaxed about the timing of the IGC. As the Prime Minister said in the speech that I have already mentioned, the Maastricht treaty has been in force for little more than 18 months, and it is rather soon

to reconsider it all. The treaty says that the review should start in 1996, so that will have to happen, but it does not lay down when the review should end.

Mr. Robin Cook: Did the Foreign Secretary see the discussion paper from the Fresh Start group, which claims a membership of 50 Tory Members? Did he note its recommendation that his objective at the forthcoming IGC should be to create a crisis with the other members? Would the Foreign Secretary like to express his personal opinion on those of his colleagues who want a crisis with those nations to whom we sell most of our exports? [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."] It is true. The markets provided by those countries are the cause of most of the inward investment in Britain. Will he therefore tell them that the crisis that they want with Europe would also be a crisis within British industry?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman is creating in his question a crisis where no crisis exists. The paper to which he referred is still in my pending tray. We are not aiming for a crisis. We aim for steady progress towards the kind of European Union with which the Government and the British people are at ease—a Europe of nations dedicated to opening markets, to free trade and to the institutions of Europe on the whole doing less, and doing it better.

Overseas Commerce

6. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans his Department has to strengthen overseas commercial activities. [25436]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): On 1 March my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary announced plans to strengthen commercial activity overseas by opening 14 new posts and creating over 100 additional commercial staff slots. New export promotion targets and programmes, many of which will involve our posts overseas, are also included in the second competitiveness White Paper, launched on 22 May.

Mr. Hendry: Given that we are experiencing an export-led recovery and that firms in my constituency and elsewhere are actively seeking new markets overseas, will my right hon. Friend give the House an assurance that our diplomats around the world see it as an ever more important part of their role to actively support British industry? Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what he sees as the key priority in that area?

Mr. Goodlad: Helping British companies to win business is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's largest single activity overseas, and accounts for 30 per cent. of front-line staff. We have 205 commercial sections in post world wide, and shortly there will be 217. The priorities for the commercial services are to provide market intelligence, to help find overseas business contacts, to support overseas market research, to provide information on overseas companies, to help promote products and services, to organise seminars and briefings and to give political and economic advice on overseas markets. They also provide a door-opening service for United Kingdom companies. I am confident that that work is being done professionally.

Mr. Grocott: Does the Minister acknowledge that the size, scale and—to some extent—the status of our overseas embassies often reflects times past rather than changing patterns in the world? What steps are being made within the Foreign Office to review the strength of our overseas representation in different countries to ensure that it reflects new and emerging patterns in the world and is not frozen in the past?

Mr. Goodlad: There is a constant process of inspection; the Foreign Office is probably the most heavily inspected and reviewed part of the public service. That is reflected by the fact that we are continually closing posts where they are no longer needed, reducing them in size and opening them where there are new challenges and opportunities. We are going through a fundamental expenditure review. I can give the hon. Gentleman the assurance that he looks for, as the list of embassies is updated on a continuous basis.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his positive response to that question. Does he accept that the major growth in the world in the next 10 to 15 years is likely to take place, not in over-regulated Europe, but in the middle east, the Indian sub-continent, the Pacific rim and south-east Asia? How many of the additional posts which he has announced will fall within the middle east, the Indian sub-continent, the Pacific rim, south-east Asia and China?

Mr. Goodlad: The short answer to my hon. Friend is a lot. Information on the new posts has been placed in the Library. The list includes Australia, Turkmenistan, Thailand, Brazil, Russia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, Mexico, Georgia, Laos and Armenia, and includes the very areas which my hon. Friend mentioned.

Iraq

7. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the United Kingdom's policy towards Iraq. [25437]

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. Douglas Hogg): Her Majesty's Government will continue to support the UN sanctions until Iraq complies with its obligations under all relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions. Recognising the suffering of the Iraqi people, we played a major part in achieving the unanimous adoption of resolution 986, permitting Iraq to export substantial quantities of oil in return for aid. Iraq's precipitate rejection of the resolution is a striking example of the regime's disregard for its own people.

Mr. Miller: I am grateful for the Minister's thoughtful reply. He will be glad to know that I shall not ask about past arms sales to Iraq. Will he assure the House that, as part of the sanctions, the United Nations is rigorously enforcing the question of arms imports into Iraq? Is he certain that no country is supplying armaments to that awful regime?

Mr. Hogg: I am not aware of any military support for Iraq, and we would do our best to frustrate it should we become aware of it.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: My right hon. and learned Friend will be aware that one of the reasons which he

gave the House for continuing sanctions was the installation of elaborate monitoring equipment and the need to ensure that it works properly. Does it?

Mr. Hogg: We are still at an early stage in installing the systems. The real problem is that Mr. Ekeus has not yet declared himself satisfied that Iraq has complied with the requirements of the Security Council resolutions that deal with weapons of mass destruction. That is particularly, although not exclusively, true of biological warfare capacity.

Bosnia

8. **Mr. Nigel Griffiths:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what further discussions he has had with his counterparts in the UN over further Serbian aggression in Bosnia and Croatia. [25438]

Mr. Hurd: I have been in close touch with counterparts about the future of the UN force in Bosnia and the detention of UN troops by the Bosnian Serbs. We have been holding talks in London with the Russian Foreign Minister, Mr. Kozyrev, in the past two days. The new French Foreign Minister will visit me this evening and that will no doubt be our main topic of conversation. While the release of the second group of hostages this morning is welcome, we all agree that all UN troops should be returned unconditionally, unharmed and at once.

Mr. Griffiths: What does the Foreign Secretary think of the failure of the Bosnian Serbs to allow the Red Cross access to the hostages? Is not that in breach of recognised international codes of conduct and morals?

Mr. Hurd: The Bosnian Serbs are in breach of those codes by detaining the hostages in the first place. We are applying pressures, both direct and indirect, to bring about their unconditional and immediate release. There has been some progress, although not yet enough. While people are held, they should be treated decently, and access by the Red Cross should be allowed.

Sir Patrick Cormack: In view of the need to maintain firmness and cohesion among the nations of the contact group, are there plans for the contact group to meet either at Heads of Government or Foreign Minister level? If there are no such plans, will my right hon. Friend consider convening a meeting?

Mr. Hurd: We had a meeting at ministerial level last week, and I am sure that we shall need another such meeting before long.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The Foreign Secretary will know that there have been some reports that Mr. Kozyrev is unenthusiastic about the proposals for an additional deployment of troops from the United Kingdom. Can the Foreign Secretary tell us as a result of his conversations with Mr. Kozyrev whether he is now reconciled to that further deployment? Is there now a risk that Russia will object at the United Nations to the deployment of those troops?

Mr. Hurd: Mr. Kozyrev said yesterday that he had been reassured by the explanations on that point. The draft resolution, which will need to go before the Security Council, will be designed to lift the ceiling of UNPROFOR, which is defined in the present resolutions and is too low, but it will not need to change the mandate. There is plenty of scope in the mandate for useful work by the reinforcements now going out to protect the British contingent in UNPROFOR—for example, supplying light artillery and equipment for mine clearing, while giving greater protection to those involved.

Mr. Budgen: If it be true that there is risk that the Bosnian war might spread across the map of Europe and involve Russia and the United States coming in on opposite sides, why are we talking about withdrawing the troops?

Mr. Hurd: Our aim is not to withdraw troops; our aim is to make a success of the present exercise. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others have said for a long time that that is our aim and our wish.

One can conceive of circumstances in which that becomes impossible, in which case, obviously, we would need to withdraw. I think that then the arms embargo would probably be lifted, that the present half peace, half war in Bosnia would become once again a full and savage war and that there would be a risk of it spreading outwards to other parts of the Balkans, with the accompanying risk that the big powers might be divided as to which side, if any, they supported.

However, our aim is not to withdraw. Our aim is to make a success of what we have set our hand to.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: The whole House will wish whatever negotiations are taking place about release of the hostages to be successful, but may we have an assurance that the British Government are not sanctioning a trade-off whereby we give, or anyone gives, undertakings not to make air strikes in return for the release of hostages? May we have an assurance that the British Government are not giving any sanction to any party that that might be our position?

Mr. Hurd: The Prime Minister gave that assurance to the House in the debate last week.

Mr. John Townend: Does my right hon. Friend accept that the majority of my constituents—I agree with them—consider that the only national vital interest we have in Bosnia is obtaining the release of our troops? Is it not strange that we have to have more troops there than any other country, especially when Italy, which presumably has a much greater national interest, and Germany, have almost none? Will he tell the House what will be the total monthly cost of humanitarian aid in the presence of our troops when all the reinforcements have been deployed, and who is paying that cost?

Mr. Hurd: We do not at the moment have the greatest number of troops; the French have the greatest number of troops, although my hon. Friend is right to say that, when the full reinforcements that have been promised are in place, we shall probably have the greatest number. The Prime Minister set out in the debate last week—I believe he had general support on both sides of the House—two main reasons why we sent troops to Bosnia. The first is the humanitarian one—to save lives. The second is the strategic one—that we wish to damp down that war if we can, to contain it and to prevent it spreading. Those are the two reasons for our decision that the Prime Minister explained, and I think that he was right.

The humanitarian aid and UNPROFOR, the UN force, are financed by the UN, overwhelmingly. We make our contribution to that, as do other countries. The UN is not sufficiently financed at the moment. There are countries—not including us—who do not pay their dues, so there is a slowness in being repaid. Fundamentally, however, those are UN operations.

Mr. Robin Cook: May I join the Foreign Secretary in warmly welcoming the latest release of hostages, and express our full support for every pressure on the Bosnian Serbs for the early and safe release of all hostages? Does he agree that the release of the majority of the hostages shows that the international community was right to show a new resolve towards the Bosnian Serbs and to refuse to give in to blackmail, and that the House was right to set aside the voices urging an immediate withdrawal, which would have been the biggest concession that the Bosnian Serbs could have asked for?

Mr. Hurd: The debate in the House last week showed the House at its best. It was entirely right that anxieties were expressed, because anxieties exist; I believe that we all feel them. However, it was also right that the great majority of voices should support the line that we are taking. We will hold to that line.

Intergovernmental Conference

9. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans the Government have to consider yielding at the next IGC additional powers to the European Parliament; and if he will list the powers concerned. [25439]

Mr. David Davis: The European Parliament acquired important new powers in the Maastricht treaty, and we have heard no convincing case for extending them further in the 1996 IGC. If it is to address genuine public concerns, the European Parliament should devote more attention to tackling fraud and to holding the Commission to account. So I can answer my hon. Friend in one word: none.

Mr. Riddick: I thank my hon. Friend for his clear and unequivocal reply. Will he confirm that, in the unseemly horse trading that will no doubt take place at next year's intergovernmental conference, the Government will make no concessions on the issue of co-decision making powers which would hand over more powers to the European Parliament at the expense of Ministers, including British Ministers—something that has been supported by the leader of the Labour Members of the European Parliament, Ms Pauline Green, and that other well known Labour lady, Ms Glenys Kinnock?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is exactly right about the Labour party's position. That is why, as my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow) said, it is no surprise that some federalists entertain fantasies about a Labour victory. Fortunately, that will never happen.

Mr. MacShane: Is the Minister aware that last September, in an interesting speech at Leiden, the Prime Minister called for the House to be more involved with the European Parliament in overseeing legislation? The sort of fatuous, anti-European Parliament remarks that the Minister has just made do not contribute to resolving the difficult problem of the democratic deficit and the need to find some balance between the need to represent our constituents in the House and the role of the European Parliament.

Mr. Davis: The hon. Gentleman, with his incredible intelligence, clearly did not listen to my answer. I made no reference to national Parliaments. He is right to say that the Prime Minister said that we should pay attention to giving our national Parliaments a greater involvement in the legislation of the European Union, and we shall be doing just that.

Mr. Jenkin: But what do my hon. Friend and his colleagues intend to do about the fact that the European Parliament will progressively gather more powers by virtue of the legal framework that currently exists?

Mr. MacShane: Quite right.

Mr. Jenkin: "Quite right," says the hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr. MacShane). As the unions chip away at our opt-out from the social chapter through the courts and through the European courts, will not the European Parliament gather power over those competencies? Has not my hon. Friend got either to take to the intergovernmental conference a plan completely to reform the legal structure of the EU or go for much more comprehensive opt-outs to stop the European Parliament interfering with the success achieved by the Government in industrial relations in this country?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right to say that there is a problem of creeping competence, and it applies precisely to the area that he describes—the social chapter opt-out. I shall pay much attention to that issue in the next six months.

Ms Quin: In response to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Riddick), the Minister mentioned issues of public concern. Will he explain why the list of topics to be considered by the reflection group, of which he is a member, concentrates overwhelmingly on institutional issues and contains no specific mention of unemployment or issues such as the environment or the reform of the common agricultural policy? How does he intend to ensure that those matters are properly discussed? As the Minister also said that he was in favour of more openness, what specific plans does he have to inform the public and Parliament about the progress made in those discussions?

Mr. Davis: I have already answered half of those questions. If the hon. Lady had paid attention to the reports of what I said at the reflections group, she would have seen that I said that less than 50 per cent. of the people of Europe currently feel that their nation state receives a benefit from the European Union. That is precisely because individual citizens do not see themselves as gaining from the European Union. I said that that issue had to be addressed by the reflections group during its considerations in the next six months.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my hon. Friend agree that, when one strips away the noise and bluster that we have heard from the Opposition on the issue, the simple fact is that more power for the European Parliament would mean less power for this Parliament? If that is what the Opposition believe, they should put it to the electorate, who would reject the notion.

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is exactly right. The Labour formula for the intergovernmental conference appears to be capitulation on qualified majority voting, collapse on co-decision and surrender on the social chapter—none of which would benefit this country.

Cyprus

10. **Mrs. Roche:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the political situation in Cyprus. [25440]

Mr. Hurd: We believe that the present division of Cyprus is unacceptable. We are actively supporting the United Nations Secretary General's mission of good offices, which offers the best hope for a just and lasting solution. Exploratory discussions between representatives of the two communities in Cyprus were held in London on 21 to 23 May. We are encouraging both sides in Cyprus to approach future negotiations positively and flexibly.

Mrs. Roche: Does the Secretary of State agree that, as a guarantor power, Britain could be doing much more to ensure, first, that refugees are able to return to their homes as part of a just solution and, secondly, that news is obtained of people who have been missing since 1974? When does the Secretary of State or one of his colleagues next expect to visit the island of Cyprus to discuss in person a long overdue speedy and just solution to the problem?

Mr. Hurd: In the past few years we have expended a lot of energy pursuing both the specific points that the hon. Lady mentioned. My colleagues and I are continually in touch with the President of Cyprus and the Foreign Minister of Cyprus, Mr. Michaelides, to discuss how we can help the two communities to reach a necessary agreement. We believe in one Cyprus with two communities and a federal constitution. It is difficult to turn that principle into a settled agreement. That is why we are in favour of private talks, which were held in London. They did not make as much progress as we had wished, but we must keep on trying, as the hon. Lady said.

Dr. Twinn: I thank my right hon. Friend for his clear statement of support for one Cyprus with two communities and also for the work that he and the Foreign Office have done to ensure that the two communities can meet to talk about matters which concern them greatly. They are the ones who must make a decision about a just and lasting solution, but does my right hon. Friend agree that Britain has a particular responsibility to Cyprus both as a guarantor power and because many British citizens who are also Cypriots look to the Government in London to become actively involved in finding a solution?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend is quite right. He and many other hon. Members on both sides of the House rightly remind me constantly that we have a special responsibility to Cyprus for both the reasons that my hon. Friend mentioned. We take that responsibility seriously, and we act upon it energetically.

Gibraltar

11. **Mr. David Young:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what actions Her Majesty's Government are taking against the illegal harassment of Gibraltarians by unjustifiable border checks. [25441]

Mr. Hurd: I have raised our concerns with my Spanish counterpart, Mr. Solana, and our ambassador in Madrid has protested formally to the Spanish Foreign Ministry. We have also approached the Schengen secretariat, other Schengen states and the European Commission. We shall continue to raise the matter with the Spaniards until they take adequate measures at the frontier with Gibraltar to ensure that people can cross the border freely and without undue impediment.

Mr. Young: When the Falkland Islands were invaded, force had to be met with force. The harassment that has taken place over many months is affecting British citizens and the economy of Gibraltar. Does the Secretary of State believe that rebukes to the Spanish Government of which they take no notice will be adequate in this situation? Does he have any other thoughts about what can be done to stop the harassment? Will he also give an assurance that the Government will not remove any of the Gibraltar Government's existing powers?

Mr. Hurd: On the first point, the hon. Gentleman is not quite right. There have been problems at the frontier. They were solved temporarily as a result of a meeting that I had with the Spanish Foreign Minister on 20 December, but the trouble has recurred recently. We must keep up the pressure and the Spaniards know that we will do that.

The hon. Gentleman's second point raises a completely separate issue. As Gibraltar wishes to remain and prosper as a financial centre within the European Union, it is important that it should comply with the rules of the European Union for which the British Government, as the sovereign power, are responsible. We are in touch with Gibraltar, particularly about the need to bring legislation on money laundering into line with the standards in Britain. I am more hopeful than I was that we are making progress. It is a separate issue, but it is important.

Mr. Colvin: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the Schengen agreement on frontier controls is not the equivalent of the external frontier of the European Union, although Spain is using it as such and as a pretext for delays at the frontier? What action is the Foreign Office taking to persuade Spain to ratify the external frontier convention in relation to Gibraltar, as that could put an end to the circumstances which enable Spain to take destructive action in respect of Gibraltar?

Mr. Hurd: I look forward to talking about the subject in greater depth with the Spaniards before long. My hon. Friend is quite right about the distinction between the Schengen agreement and the external frontier. We do not believe that the Spaniards have any justification for their action.

Mr. Trimble: Does the Foreign Secretary consider that the threat which was reportedly made to impose direct rule on Gibraltar might encourage the Spaniards to believe that the constitutional position of Gibraltar could be undermined in view of precedents elsewhere? Does he acknowledge that the United Kingdom would have more credibility in regard to upholding the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Gibraltar if it fully respected the democratic institutions in Gibraltar?

Mr. Hurd: We hold entirely to the undertaking given to the people of Gibraltar in the 1969 constitution that we would never enter into arrangements whereby the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another

state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes. On the separate issue of direct rule, we have no desire to act directly; for the reasons that I have already given, however, it is important that the Government of Gibraltar should pass legislation bringing their law book into line with their own wishes and ambitions as a financial centre.

Intergovernmental Conference

12. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has drawn up a formal agenda for the forthcoming intergovernmental conference. [25442]

14. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's preparation for the intergovernmental conference. [25444]

Mr. David Davis: The intergovernmental conference is still some way off—at least seven months, and perhaps more. Several issues are already identified for discussion—I have spelt them out on previous occasions—and other issues may be added. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister explained the basis of our approach to the IGC in the House on 1 March and Cabinet Committees have already taken a preliminary look at some of the individual issues.

Mr. Knapman: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. At a time when it is becoming increasingly difficult to find those who wish to remember that they voted for the Maastricht treaty, I was wondering whether a White Paper would be a useful performance factor to enable the Foreign Office to prove that it is winning all the arguments? For instance, in the preamble we still have such phrases as "ever closer union" and "single institutional framework". Do they sit easily with our professed aim to safeguard Britain's national interests?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend will be unsurprised to hear that I not only remember voting for Maastricht but I have a list of those who did and those who did not. As for his comments about ever closer union and creeping competence, I have already answered my hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, North (Mr. Jenkin) on that matter. My hon. Friend can be very clear that I shall continue to oppose centralising tendencies in the European Union, including the matters that he raised. On the White Paper, I refer him to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 23 May at columns 703-4 of *Hansard*.

Dr. Wright: Will the Minister confirm that the thrust of British policy as we approach the IGC is to win friends and influence people? Will he tell us now, in concrete terms, which friends we are currently winning and over which issues we are now exercising some influence? Is not the truth that, as before, the British Government are marching us resolutely and remorselessly to irrelevant and impotent isolation?

Mr. Davis: Government policy is principally aimed at defending the British national interest—that first, that second and that last. I was interested to hear the hon. Gentleman's variation of his leader's "I'll never stand alone" frame, in which Labour will stand up to nobody for anything. That is not the way to win arguments in Europe.

Sir Roger Moate: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Prime Minister made a clear commitment to restoring the powers of this national Parliament over European matters, which must include European legislation? Will he confirm also that there will be no weakening of that resolve, and describe the mechanisms by which that objective will be achieved?

Mr. Davis: My hon. Friend is right. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said that he wants to see this national Parliament and all national Parliaments exercise rights in the control of legislation. That is very much part of the brief that I take to the reflections group, and which I expect we shall take to the intergovernmental conference.

Mr. Soley: Was the Minister not present in the House on 3 May, when the Foreign Secretary said that he supported the Maastricht treaty aim of a common foreign and security policy and that he would continue to build that policy "brick by brick", to use his phrase? Does the Minister recall the Prime Minister saying on 23 May that he would block any attempt by the Community to extend its powers into foreign defence policy? Perhaps the Minister will say what is Cabinet policy.

Mr. Davis: That is a remarkable exercise in ignorance by the hon. Gentleman, who does not distinguish between Community and Union. The British Government's stance is straightforward: to make a common foreign security policy work, and work well, on an intergovernmental basis.

Monetary Union

13. **Mr. Bill Walker:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's policy on European monetary union; and how this will be presented at the reflections group. [25443]

Mr. David Davis: The United Kingdom will not participate in a single currency in 1996 or in 1997. The United Kingdom would only ever take part in a single currency if to do so would be in the national interest. Under the UK protocol to the treaty on European union, any decision to seek to join a single currency would be a matter for the UK Government and Parliament. The Government see no reason for any of the articles or associated protocols relating to economic and monetary union to be on the agenda for the 1996 intergovernmental conference. Neither is it on the agenda of the reflections group. The Government do not therefore intend to provide any submission on the issue to the reflections group.

Mr. Walker: I thank my hon. Friend for that constructive and helpful reply. I take it that when he attends the reflections group he will be aware that other participants will arrive with the views of their countries and national Parliaments and Executives clearly in mind. They may want to do things that my hon. Friend might oppose. May I have my hon. Friend's assurance that what he has just said will give him the ground for opposing?

Mr. Davis: In one sense, we shall be observing a difference of view between other countries. Some will want to relax the convergence criteria, some will want to tighten them. For that reason, I do not foresee a single currency being a major issue in the reflections group or the intergovernmental conference.

Rev. Martin Smyth: The thrust of the Minister's answer was helpful, but does he accept that he who pays the piper calls the tune? In the European context, do we

not have to monitor carefully those who would print bank notes and issue Government bonds and destroy the whole economy?

Mr. Davis: One benefit of the British Government's position is that we are part of that process. Our policy input is extraordinarily important, and we are taken extremely seriously in those arguments. We have as much influence as anyone could wish.

Mr. Bellingham: Does my hon. Friend agree that the quickest way to create a federal Europe would be to enter a single currency, so it is hardly surprising that the Government are so cautious? Public support for the Government's position is also hardly surprising. When will the Opposition wake up to that fact?

Mr. Davis: The answer to my hon. Friend's last point is never.

Former Yugoslavia

15. **Mr. Gapes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on Britain's relations with the successor states of the former Yugoslavia. [25446]

Mr. Hogg: We have recognised the states of the former Yugoslavia with the exception of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The development of relations with the latter will depend on its recognition of the other states and on its readiness to take further concrete steps to promote a political settlement to the conflict.

Mr. Gapes: Does the Government's position remain one of support for a negotiated peaceful outcome to the crisis? Will the Minister assure us that the Government's position is at one with that of the United Nations Secretary-General on the additional troops being sent to former Yugoslavia, and that they should remain and be under UN control?

Mr. Hogg: It is indeed our policy to promote a political settlement within former Yugoslavia, and Bosnia especially, although I am bound to say that progress on that is not so rapid as we would like. The reinforcements are being deployed under the UN flag to reinforce the performance by UNPROFOR of the mandate.

Morocco

17. **Mr. Janner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of relations between Britain and Morocco. [25448]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Relations between Britain and Morocco are good. We recognise Morocco's significance as a stable and moderate country in a region which, though fragile, is of increasing importance to the EU.

Mr. Janner: I thank the Minister for his answer. Can he reassure the House that the Government will continue to do their best to help to reach a positive conclusion to the EU-Morocco fishing agreement, and to the European-Moroccan Mediterranean Association amendment, in the interests of the regional stability to which he has referred, as well as economic progress in the area, especially in view of the great suffering in Morocco due to the awful drought and its consequences?

Mr. Hogg: With regard to the association agreement, we support it and hope to see an agreement concluded. We favour greater access for Moroccan goods to EU markets. We would also welcome a fisheries agreement and are disappointed that one was not possible. When negotiating that agreement, it is important not to prejudice the position that we have taken for some time on the question of western Sahara.

Sir David Steel: How actively are the Government attempting to assist the ending of the procrastination in holding a referendum on western Sahara?

Mr. Hogg: We are anxious to see a referendum and we are doing what we can to bring that about. It depends in the end on persuasion, and we are trying to persuade.

Diplomatic Locations

18. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many new diplomatic locations have been opened by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in each of the past three years; at what cost to public funds; how many similar locations have been closed; at what saving to public funds; and if he will make a statement. [25449]

Mr. Hurd: I have deposited the information requested by the hon. Gentleman in the Library. Our interests are global and our overseas representation needs to match them. We must respond quickly and flexibly to changing opportunities and to challenges. This year we plan to close three posts and open 15 new ones. The new posts are concentrated in countries where new export opportunities for British companies are opening up.

Mr. Greenway: I welcome my right hon. Friend's reply that 15 new trading opportunities have been opened up for the United Kingdom. Is he satisfied that the Treasury is prepared to respond quickly enough with the money required to open new diplomatic missions abroad, especially where there is a possibility of new trade, as has occurred in recent years in eastern Europe, including Russia and Poland?

Mr. Hurd: No, indeed. The Treasury would not be doing its job if I felt comfortable about that. The Treasury makes us sweat to open new posts. For instance, we have plans to abolish more than 500 support staff over three years. Such savings and reviews and constant pressure for greater efficiency, to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State always refers, are what we rightly have to implement and maintain so as to expand overseas and help our exports in the way that I have announced.

Mr. Mackinlay: Does the Secretary of State have an opinion about the need for a consulate in Krakow, where many other principal European players have consular services? Bearing in mind its important geographical position in central Europe, will he have regard to the desire both by British people and by Polish people to see some significant representation in that important southern Polish city?

Mr. Hurd: Let me look into that. I have not studied that, although I notice that at least 10 of the posts that we have opened in the past three years are in central and eastern Europe, for the kind of reasons that the hon. Gentleman gives.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. Friend think that redeployment is going quickly enough? There is a

suspicion that we have perhaps too many diplomats in lovely cities such as Paris and not enough in Poland and eastern and central Europe.

Mr. Hurd: We have cut Paris by, I think, 10 per cent. in recent years. With a new French Government and new personalities, as is the case now, when it is important to get to grips with them and the issues quickly, one sees vividly the need to have trained and expert and professional staff in a place such as Paris.

United Nations Anniversary

19. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans Her Majesty's Government have to commemorate and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. [25450]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There will be a major national commemoration ceremony in Westminster Hall on 26 June in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen to mark the 50th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations charter.

Mr. Hughes: I thank the Minister for his answer. Given the huge advantage to international peace and mediation in the last 50 years achieved by the UN, which was founded here, will the Minister give an assurance that not only will the Government continue to be absolutely unqualified supporters of the United Nations but that they will also take the lead in ensuring that the UN is equipped to deal with the objectives of the next half century? In particular, that may mean retargeting some of its efforts and ensuring that some of our allies and friends play as full a part—including contributing fully, as we have done—in ensuring that it is an even more effective organisation in the years ahead.

Mr. Hogg: I believe that we have been taking the lead—for instance, on proposals that we have made in the context of conflict prevention and more specifically on the action that the United Kingdom Government have taken in support of the United Nations in Bosnia.

Mr. Jopling: Will the Minister use every opportunity during this year to express the grave reservations of the Government and the House about moves in the United States Congress to reduce subscriptions to the vital work of the United Nations? Will he make it clear to the members of Congress whom he meets that that is exactly what the world does not need at this time?

Mr. Hogg: I agree entirely with my right hon. Friend. I regard the legislation that was passed in the Congress as extremely damaging and I regret that it happened. I shall certainly take every opportunity to make that point to American Congressmen and Senators and to stress the importance of making a full contribution to the United Nations. Indeed, I shall make the further point that that is required by their international obligations.

Mr. Murphy: Will the Minister give an assurance to the House that, in the year when the United Nations is celebrating its 50th anniversary, there are no proposals for Britain to withdraw from the oldest of those agencies, the International Labour Organisation?

Mr. Hogg: As it happens, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment answered questions yesterday tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) on precisely that matter. I commend to the hon. Gentleman those replies, which make the position and the commitment of the United Kingdom Government quite clear.

Sir Michael Marshall: Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept the appreciation of the Inter-Parliamentary Union for the considerable assistance rendered by our ambassador and mission in New York for the IPU conference in August and September on the occasion of its 50th anniversary? Following what he has just said, will he use his good offices to persuade the US Congress to support that opportunity to assess the needs and requirements of the United Nations for the next 50 years?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his kind remarks about the British ambassador to the United Nations. On the second part of his question, the answer is yes.

Consular Activities

20. **Dr. Howells:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the cost of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's consular activities in (a) Europe, (b) north America, (c) south America, (d) Asia, (e) Africa and (f) Australasia in 1994. [25451]

Mr. Baldry: A breakdown by geographical area of how consular resources were spent in 1993-94 is contained in the 1995 departmental report of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Dr. Howells: I thank the Minister for that answer, but I should like to ask him about one aspect of that expenditure: entry clearance duties. What measures are being taken to strengthen the alleged links between his Department and the Home Office to ensure that the activities and duties carried out by our consulates around the world with regard to entry clearance are of a sufficiently high standard and efficient enough to ensure that backlogs of work are not placed at the door the hard-pressed and under-resourced immigration service at ports of entry in Britain?

Mr. Baldry: The entry clearance officers who work in our posts throughout the world are a mixture of Home Office and Foreign Office officials and they seek to carry out their work expeditiously. If the hon. Gentleman can instance any post where he thinks that entry clearance work is not being carried out as speedily as it should be, I hope that he will bring it specifically to my attention. Our experience is that throughout the world our entry clearance officers work hard, diligently and efficiently.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Madam Speaker: With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

MERCHANT SHIPPING

That the Merchant Shipping (Survey and Certification) Regulations 1995 (S.I., 1995, No. 1210) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

EDUCATION (SCOTLAND)

That the Education (Fees and Awards) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1995 (S.I., 1995, No. 1271) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Question agreed to.

Leaseholders' Protection

3.30 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to limit the annual maintenance charge which may be levied on leaseholders and a leaseholder's liability for certain works, where the freeholder is a local authority or housing association.

The Bill is intended to address a specific injustice facing many leaseholders whose landlords are either local authorities or housing associations.

At the outset, I should make two points clear. First, the Bill does not cover leaseholders in the private sector. I do not deny that there are problems in that area, but they are generally different, and the remedies should be different too.

Secondly, my Bill does not purport to be offering a comprehensive or the only solution. I would be willing to incorporate other measures or to vary the specifics as a result of suggestions which I hope that my initial proposals will prompt. However, the basic problem must be tackled—that of the sheer size of annual maintenance charges being imposed on many leaseholders, and the underlying causes.

In my constituency, some leaseholders suddenly received demands in excess of £20,000, with curt warnings, such as "Pay or face eviction." The highest annual bill brought to my attention was £25,850, for a new roof and double glazing.

In a letter to me, the leaseholder concerned wrote:

"We are being forced to pay for things we do not require and we have no way of affording. We are under immense stress and strain not knowing how we are going to cope—it is an absolute trauma on top of the problem of being unemployed. We are desperate and fear that we will lose our home."

Such leaseholders are not, by any stretch of the imagination, wealthy. Often, they face an annual bill which is larger than the original cost of their property. That is an absurd situation. For them, it is a financial nightmare. It has brought them to the edge of personal disaster, causing untold strain, undermining their whole sense of security, leaving them haunted by the prospect of imminent homelessness.

Alongside that problem are complex disputes about the nature of the maintenance work that needs to be done. Leaseholders often claim that they are being forced to pay huge amounts for work that is unnecessary or which they do not want—for example, double glazing. Other leaseholders tell of the verbal guarantees they were given at the time of purchase that certain renovation works would be carried out at not cost to them—guarantees later reneged upon.

There are disputes about repairs versus improvements, and renovation as against remedying structural design faults. Often the lease is inadequate or unclear, an arcane area into which I do not intend to venture today.

The first proposal in my Bill is a rough and ready one aimed at bringing fast protection to these financially embattled leaseholders. It would put a clear statutory limit, a cap, on the amount that a leaseholder could reasonably be charged by the landlord or agent in any one year. The exact amount will be fixed, after consultation, by regulation.

[Mr. Piers Merchant]

There is already acceptance of the concept of a reasonable limit in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. However, that is an uncertain protection, usually requiring lengthy and often expensive litigation, and producing inconsistency in practice. A fixed figure would be clear to all parties, who could plan in the certain knowledge that it would provide a sure quantity of protection.

Such an idea recognises that it is legitimate for a freeholder to expect a leaseholder to contribute to general works, and that sometimes those works may be major. By signing a lease, the leaseholder accepted certain responsibilities, and I do not wish to extinguish those. Nevertheless, the Bill would put into figures a cap above which an annual demand might be widely considered unreasonable.

My second proposal is designed to prevent an unscrupulous landlord from issuing bills up to the annual limit each year, which, when compounded, could also become unreasonable. I propose a further maximum charge over any such five-year period, which would also be fixed by regulation.

My third proposal seeks to give leaseholders more powers in the decision-making process, as a means of reducing maintenance charges. It would give a leaseholder the right to obtain his own survey to determine what work was required, followed by the right to obtain his own tenders for that work, combined with longer statutory notice periods and tighter regulations on consultation. The landlord would be obliged to take the leaseholder's survey and tenders into account, and would have to show good reason for not accepting the lowest tender price for the least work deemed necessary.

My fourth and final proposal is to define more clearly what works a freeholder can insist must be done—those that are mandatory on the leaseholder, as opposed to those that would be optional and might be accepted or rejected by the leaseholder. A local authority or housing association would be unable to force the leaseholder to contribute to works in the latter category.

Such a distinction might appear difficult to make, but closer examination convinces me that it would be relatively easy to list most works in one of two categories. For example, the exterior painting of a block or the repair of a leaking roof would fall into the mandatory category, while double glazing or a purely cosmetic improvement scheme would not.

That "exemption clause" would immediately protect many leaseholders against expensive projects in which they do not wish to participate. On the other hand, they could opt in if they wished: it might well be in their interest to do so, so that they could benefit from the economies of scale that might be available.

Together, these measures would give extensive new protection to leaseholders without freeing them from the necessary obligations that leasehold—as opposed to freehold—brings. They would also help to achieve a better balance of power between leaseholders and public-sector freeholders.

At present, the problem is one of imbalance. Public sector freeholders are mighty organisations with huge financial muscle; they appear less amenable to leaseholder pressure than the average private sector freeholder, normally a small organisation that depends on leaseholder good will for ease of running. There have even been suggestions that some local authority housing departments or housing associations have a hidden agenda to force out leaseholders as part of a design to return properties to tenancy only. One housing official said that to me in so many words.

My scheme is deliberately designed to have no adverse public expenditure consequences. Indeed, it is preferable to some existing suggestions that would have such consequences. The leaseholder consent provisions would force landlords to cut the more ambitious modernisation projects to acceptable levels; long-term renovation would have to be staged over a number of years, rather than pushed through in one go. Public sector freeholders would have to behave like freehold home owners in the maintenance of their property, taking one step at a time as finance allowed.

In the very few remaining cases in which that was simply not possible—for example, urgent works to ensure structural safety—it might, rarely, be necessary for the freeholder to draw on other funds. That small amount—in comparison with the total held—would have to come from efficiency savings. There is some potential there, as my Bill would also prevent any extra costs resulting from the Bill from being imposed on tenants.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Piers Merchant.

LEASEHOLDERS' PROTECTION

Mr. Piers Merchant accordingly presented a Bill to limit the annual maintenance charge which may be levied on leaseholders and a leaseholder's liability for certain works, where the freeholder is a local authority or housing association: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 July, and to be printed. [Bill 127.]

Orders of the Day

Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill [Lords]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New clause 2

ORDER TO MAKE MATERIAL AVAILABLE

'.—(1) The procurator fiscal may, for the purpose of an investigation into whether a person has benefited from the commission of an offence to which this Chapter applies and as to the amount of that benefit, apply to the sheriff for an order under subsection (2) below in relation to particular material or material of a particular description.

(2) If on such an application the sheriff is satisfied that the conditions in subsection (4) below are fulfilled, he may make an order that the person who appears to him to be in possession of the material to which the application relates shall—

(a) produce it to a constable for him to take away; or

(b) give a constable access to it,

within such period as the order may specify.

This subsection is subject to section (*Disclosure of information held by government departments*)(11) of this Act.

(3) The period to be specified in an order under subsection (2) above shall be seven days unless it appears to the sheriff that a longer or shorter period would be appropriate in the particular circumstances of the application.

(4) The conditions referred to in subsection (2) above are—

(a) that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a specified person has benefited from the commission of an offence to which this Chapter applies;

(b) that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the material to which the application relates—

(i) is likely to be of substantial value (whether by itself or together with other material) to the investigation for the purpose of which the application is made; and

(ii) does not consist of or include items subject to legal privilege; and

(c) that there are reasonable grounds for believing that it is in the public interest, having regard—

(i) to the benefit likely to accrue to the investigation if the material is obtained; and

(ii) to the circumstances under which the person in possession of the material holds it,

that the material should be produced or that access to it should be given.

(5) Where the sheriff makes an order under subsection (2)(b) above in relation to material on any premises he may, on the application of the procurator fiscal, order any person who appears to him to be entitled to grant entry to the premises to allow a constable to enter the premises to obtain access to the material.

(6) An application under subsection (1) or (5) above may be made ex parte in chambers.

(7) Provision may be made by rules of court as to—

(a) the discharge and variation of orders under this section, and

(b) proceedings relating to such orders.

(8) Where the material to which an application under this section relates consists of information contained in a computer—

(a) an order under subsection (2)(a) above shall have effect as an order to produce the material in a form in which it can be taken away and in which it is visible and legible; and

(b) an order under subsection (2)(b) above shall have effect as an order to give access to the material in a form in which it is visible and legible.

(9) An order under subsection (2) above—

(a) shall not confer any right to production of, or access to, items subject to legal privilege;

(b) shall have effect notwithstanding any obligation as to secrecy or other restriction upon the disclosure of information imposed by statute or otherwise; and

(c) may be made in relation to material in the possession of an authorised government department;

and in this subsection "authorised government department" means a government department which is an authorised department for the purposes of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947.

(10) In this section—

(a) "items subject to legal privilege" and "premises" have the same meanings as in section 40 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987; and

(b) references to a person benefiting from the commission of an offence to which this Chapter applies, in relation to conduct which is not such an offence but which would have been if it had occurred in Scotland, shall be construed in accordance with section 71 of this Act as if that conduct had so occurred.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

3.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following: Government new clause 3—*Authority for search*—Government new clause 4—*Disclosure of information held by government departments.*

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The powers provided by the new clauses are not new. We are simply extending those powers that already exist under the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1987, for the purpose of investigation into drug trafficking, to cover investigations into whether a person has benefited from the commission of any other offence. The powers in the new clauses, which have been requested by the chief police officers, will considerably assist investigation into the proceeds of crime.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 3

AUTHORITY FOR SEARCH

'.—(1) The procurator fiscal may, for the purpose of an investigation into whether a person has benefited from the commission of an offence to which this Chapter applies and as to the amount of that benefit, apply to the sheriff for a warrant under this section in relation to specified premises.

(2) On such application the sheriff may issue a warrant authorising a constable to enter and search the premises if the sheriff is satisfied—

(a) that an order made under section (*Order to make material available*) of this Act in relation to material on the premises has not been complied with; or

(b) that the conditions in subsection (3) below are fulfilled; or

(c) that the conditions in subsection (4) below are fulfilled.

(3) The conditions referred to in subsection (2)(b) above are—

(a) that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a specified person has benefited from the commission of an offence to which this Chapter applies; and

(b) that the conditions in section (*Order to make material available*)(4)(b) and (c) of this Act are fulfilled in relation to any material on the premises; and

(c) that it would not be appropriate to make an order under that section in relation to the material because—

(i) it is not practicable to communicate with any person entitled to produce the material; or

(ii) it is not practicable to communicate with any person entitled to grant access to the material or entitled to grant entry to the premises on which the material is situated; or

(iii) the investigation for the purposes of which the application is made might be seriously prejudiced unless a constable could secure immediate access to the material.

(4) The conditions referred to in subsection (2)(c) above are—

(a) that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a specified person has benefited from the commission of an offence to which this Chapter applies; and

(b) that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that there is on the premises material relating to the specified person, or to the question whether that person has so benefited or the amount of that benefit, which is likely to be of substantial value (whether by itself or together with other material) to the investigation for the purpose of which the application is made, but that the material cannot at the time of the application be particularised; and

(c) that—

(i) it is not practicable to communicate with any person entitled to grant entry to the premises; or

(ii) entry to the premises will not be granted unless a warrant is produced; or

(iii) the investigation for the purpose of which the application is made might be seriously prejudiced unless a constable arriving at the premises could secure immediate entry to them.

(5) Where a constable has entered premises in the execution of a warrant issued under this section, he may seize and retain any material, other than items subject to legal privilege, which is likely to be of substantial value (whether by itself or together with other material) to the investigation for the purpose of which the warrant was issued.

(6) Subsection (10) of section (*Order to make material available*) of this Act shall apply for the purposes of this section as it applies for the purposes of that section.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 4

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION HELD BY GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS

'.—(1) Subject to subsection (4) below, the Court of Session may on an application by the Lord Advocate order any material mentioned in subsection (3) below which is in the possession of an authorised government department to be produced to the Court within such period as the Court may specify.

(2) The power to make an order under subsection (1) above is exercisable if—

(a) the powers conferred on the Court by section 91(1)(a) of this Act are exercisable by virtue of section 92(2) of this Act; or

(b) those powers are exercisable by virtue of section 92(3) of this Act and the Court has made a restraint order which has not been recalled.

(3) The material referred to in subsection (1) above is any material which—

(a) has been submitted to an officer of an authorised government department by a person who holds, or has at any time held, realisable property;

(b) has been made by an officer of an authorised government department in relation to such a person; or

(c) is correspondence which passed between an officer of an authorised government department and such a person;

and an order under that subsection may require the production of all such material or of a particular description of such material, being material in the possession of the department concerned.

(4) An order under subsection (1) above shall not require the production of any material unless it appears to the Court of Session that the material is likely to contain information that would facilitate the exercise of the powers conferred on the Court by section 91(1)(a) of or paragraph 1 or 12 of Schedule 3 to this Act or on an administrator appointed under paragraph 1(1) of that Schedule.

(5) The Court may by order authorise the disclosure to such an administrator of any material produced under subsection (1) above or any part of such material; but the Court shall not make an order under this subsection unless a reasonable opportunity has been given for an officer of the department to make representations to the Court.

(6) Material disclosed in pursuance of an order under subsection (5) above may, subject to any conditions contained in the order, be further disclosed for the purposes of the functions under Part II of this Act of the administrator or the High Court.

(7) The Court of Session may by order authorise the disclosure to a person mentioned in subsection (8) below of any material produced under subsection (1) above or any part of such material; but the Court shall not make an order under this subsection unless—

(a) a reasonable opportunity has been given for an officer of the department to make representations to the Court; and

(b) it appears to the Court that the material is likely to be of substantial value in exercising functions relating to the investigation of crime.

(8) The persons referred to in subsection (7) above are—

(a) a constable;

(b) the Lord Advocate or any procurator fiscal; and

(c) an officer within the meaning of the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979.

(9) Material disclosed in pursuance of an order under subsection (7) above may, subject to any conditions contained in the order, be further disclosed for the purposes of functions relating to the investigation of crime or whether any person has benefited from the commission of an offence to which this Chapter applies or the amount of that benefit.

(10) Material may be produced or disclosed in pursuance of this section notwithstanding any obligation as to secrecy or other restriction upon the disclosure of information imposed by statute or otherwise.

(11) An order under subsection (1) above and, in the case of material in the possession of an authorised government department, an order under section (*Order to make material available*)(2) of this Act may require any officer of the department (whether named in the order or not) who may for the time being be in possession of the material concerned to comply with such order; and any such order shall be served as if the proceedings were civil proceedings against the department.

(12) Where any requirement is included in any order by virtue of subsection (11) above, the person on whom the order is served—

(a) shall take all reasonable steps to bring it to the attention of the officer concerned; and

(b) if the order is not brought to that officer's attention within the period referred to in subsection (1) above, shall report the reasons for the failure to the Court of Session,

and it shall also be the duty of any other officer of the department in receipt of the order to take such steps as are mentioned in paragraph (a) above.

(13) In this section "authorised government department" means a government department which is an authorised department for the purposes of the Crown Proceedings Act 1947; and subsection (10) of section (*Order to make material available*) of this Act shall apply for the purposes of this section as it applies for the purposes of that section.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New clause 5

VERDICT OF NOT PROVEN NO LONGER COMPETENT

'. In any criminal proceedings the verdict of not proven shall no longer be competent.'.—*[Mr. Home Robertson.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. John Home Robertson (East Lothian): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 5 would do away with the device which allows Scottish juries to let an accused person off while indicating that they think that he probably committed the crime. That is obviously a thoroughly unsatisfactory state of affairs. Our famous not proven verdict is a sort of formal cop-out, which has been regard with much curiosity, but which has not been adopted in any other jury system on the planet, as far as I know.

I strongly believe that amendments to Scots law should be made in a Scottish legislature. I am confident that that will be possible perhaps in three years' time, but I know that the availability of this widely misunderstood hybrid verdict is giving rise to serious problems now. As, for the time being, this House is the only place in which Scots law can be amended, I hope that the House will give serious consideration to the proposal.

I hope that it is clear from my reputation that I cherish Scotland's institutions and its traditions, and perhaps even our national idiosyncrasies, but it is abundantly clear to me that this particular example is far more bother than it is worth. It is making real mischief and devaluing the quality of Scottish justice. I understand that the distinction between not proven and not guilty dates back to a trial in 1728, in which the jury was so unimpressed by the prosecution case that it decided that the established verdict of not proven would not be clear enough in that particular case. The jurors set a Scottish precedent by finding the accused not guilty. That is where it all started.

Ever since then, Scots juries have had a menu of three verdicts available to them. The first is not guilty, which means what it says. The second is guilty, which means very guilty. The third is not proven, which is interpreted as meaning that the jury thinks that the accused is possibly or probably guilty, but has the effect of acquitting him.

The not proven verdict is a comprehensive cop-out. The accused person may be technically and effectively acquitted. Of course, he cannot be retried for the same offence, but it leaves an indelible smear on the character and record of that acquitted person. That is a thoroughly undesirable departure from the principle that we are all innocent until proven guilty.

On Monday this week, a jury returned a not proven verdict on a lawyer who had been accused of a drugs offence. In theory, he has been acquitted, but it is fair to assume that his reputation is blemished, and that his career is likely to be affected as a consequence of that not proven verdict. He is not guilty but, after that verdict, he is not innocent, either.

I appreciate that the not proven verdict is a welcome bolthole for a guilty person who would otherwise be sentenced but, by the same token, it is an intolerable burden for an innocent person to carry, and all the worse because one cannot appeal against a not proven verdict to clear one's name.

The situation is even worse for the victims of crime in these cases. They have a clear message from the jury that the original accused person may well be guilty, but that person walks away without a sentence and the police cannot reopen the case against him or anyone else. Clearly, that is an especially traumatic and unsatisfactory state of affairs for victims and the relatives of victims of serious or violent crime.

3.45 pm

We are all indebted to Kathleen and Joe Duffy for the thoughtful and constructive campaign that they have been waging since the extraordinary conclusion of the trial of the man accused of murdering their 19-year-old daughter, Amanda, in 1993. My hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) has been closely involved with the Duffy family as their Member of Parliament, and the House will know that he has been pressing for many years for the abolition of the not proven verdict. I have no doubt that he will seek to catch your eye, Madam Speaker.

I do not anticipate that the new clause will command the unanimous support of the Scottish legal profession. Indeed, it would be unusual and worrying if it did. I fully realise that a not proven verdict must be a useful last straw for a desperate defence advocate to grasp, but there is plenty of evidence of long-standing concern about this curious formula among prominent lawyers in Scotland.

Dr. Godman: Ignoring lawyers for a moment—it is always a pleasure to ignore them—does my hon. Friend think that the not proven verdict has any merit at all?

Mr. Home Robertson: I do not think that it has any merit whatever, but my hon. Friend will no doubt seek to participate in the debate later.

I see no useful purpose in maintaining the distinction, or cop-out. The accused person should be acquitted or convicted; no middle way should be available. That has been said down through the years. The most famous quotation is perhaps that from Sir Walter Scott who described the verdict as

"that bastard verdict, illogical, contrary to legal principle and wholly indefensible".

Much more recently, Lord Wheatley described it as

"indefensible in logic and a relic of procedures long-since abandoned".

I cannot resist mentioning my favourite Scottish lawyer, my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), who has been campaigning against the not proven verdict for many years—starting, I think, with a ten-minute Bill on 5 February 1969, when he represented Aberdeen, South. It remains to be seen whether the present hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) will do likewise.

The not proven verdict may be a rather quaint Scottish tradition, but I submit that nostalgia cannot be a sound basis for good justice. The not proven verdict is a device for sidestepping justice and has been tolerated for far too long.

Above all, it is time for the Government to come off the fence. Lord Rodger, the Lord Advocate, has said publicly that he is uneasy about this verdict. At one stage, the Government said that they were awaiting the outcome of the English Royal Commission on Criminal Justice, which came out strongly against the idea of introducing scope for a not proven verdict to be used by English juries. The Secretary of State for Scotland undertook to review the issue back in 1993, but I understand that the

[Mr. Home Robertson]

review concluded with yet another question—what should be done about majority verdicts if the not proven option were to be removed?

It looks to me as if the Government have copped out of the opportunity to deal with Scotland's notorious cop-out verdict. The Secretary of State has found refuge in another fudge. I accept that the point about majority verdicts must be dealt with, but the fact remains that the not proven verdict is not a serious verdict. It is a formula which should be consigned to history. The case against it has been conclusively proven, and I commend the new clause to the House as a way of dealing with the problem once and for all.

Mr. Menzies Campbell (Fife, North-East): The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) moved the new clause with commendable brevity. I wish that I could be quite as congratulatory about the terms in which he did so.

I do not mind attacks on lawyers—that is part of the rations on these occasions—but when the hon. Gentleman is reduced to praying in aid Sir Walter Scott, it is worth pointing out, as I think I did on Second Reading, that one of the reasons that Sir Walter Scott was driven to write the Waverley novels was the fact that, up to then, he had had a rather unsuccessful career at the Scottish Bar. While he may be regarded as an authority on the 19th-century novel, he is not generally regarded as someone upon whom great reliance can be placed in important matters of Scots law.

The hon. Member for East Lothian is quite right, to the extent that part of his thesis is that no legal system can survive if it does not submit itself to scrutiny from time to time about its practice and its procedure. That is especially the case when there is a wave of public opinion, to which reference has been made, which appears to support a change which seems right superficially.

It is always important and significant, however, to have regard to the extent to which a change of the kind proposed in the new clause may have profound and far-reaching consequences. In my judgment, the new clause has such consequences, to which the hon. Gentleman has not addressed himself, either in the speech with which he moved the new clause or, indeed, in producing a series of consequential amendments to deal with some of the difficulties which the simple abolition of the not proven verdict would undoubtedly bring about.

There is no justification for keeping the not proven verdict simply because it is peculiarly Scottish or because it has been long established in the Scottish system of law. The case for its abolition must depend on whether it is frustrating justice. It must also depend on a proper understanding of Scottish legal procedure.

As the Government's consultation document "Improving the Delivery of Justice in Scotland" pointed out, much of the recent criticism of the not proven verdict proceeds on misconceptions about its nature and its effect. People genuinely believed that, if a person was found not proven, he or she could be prosecuted again if fresh evidence became available, not understanding that the not proven verdict is a verdict of acquittal—the Scottish equivalent of a person tholing his or her assize. Another part of the public's misconception is that, if an individual is found to be not proven, no one else can ever be prosecuted for the crime said to have been committed.

Before we rely too much on a wave of public opinion, one has to ask oneself about the extent to which that public support for change is based on a proper understanding of the existing legal principles involved.

Mr. John McFall (Dumbarton): The hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned public opinion. Does he accept that the public look to the law as it exists, and that the job of the Crown is to prove beyond reasonable doubt the guilt of an individual? If it proves that, the case is proven, and if it does not prove that, the case is not proven. Logically and simplistically, the case for a two-verdict system is manifest.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman gave the game away when he said "simplistically". I shall come to that. The difficulty—perhaps it is not a difficulty but an important feature—of the not proven verdict is that it is a sophisticated verdict in a sophisticated legal system. I shall explain why it should be retained.

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

Mr. Campbell: No. I want to make some progress, as I am sure that many hon. Members wish to catch Madam Speaker's eye.

It is often said—indeed, the hon. Member for East Lothian said it—that not proven is an easy way out for the jury. In my professional practice—perhaps I ought to declare an interest having been a member of the Faculty of Advocates for some 27 years—I do not recall more than a couple of trials in which a not proven verdict was reached when I felt that justice had been impeded or had not been done. Indeed, I confess that more often I felt a considerable sense of injustice when there was a ringing cry of not guilty, which is what I understand the hon. Gentleman would prefer to a verdict of not proven.

As I have said, not proven is a sophisticated verdict in what we are right to regard as a sophisticated legal system. The circumstances in which it is appropriate may not be capable of scientific prediction, but the law is not an empirical but a normative discipline. The verdict allows juries, sheriffs and justices of the peace sitting alone the opportunity to express a shade of meaning concerning an acquittal different from what they believe would be justified by the use of the words "not guilty".

We should be justified in removing the not proven verdict from our procedure only if it could be shown that it stood in the way of best practice. The hon. Gentleman talked about what response such a verdict might produce in the mind of the victim, and I can offer some anecdotal evidence pointing in the opposite direction from that in which he sought to point the House. In the mind of one of my constituents who was the victim of a sexual assault, that verdict has continued to provide a justification for her courage in exposing herself to cross-examination in open court.

Anyone with any understanding of the position in which a female victim finds herself when she claims that she has been the subject of a sexual assault will appreciate the fact that it is often an act of considerable bravery for that individual to stand in court, give evidence and be subjected to a rigorous and sometimes most unpleasant

cross-examination about her sexual history. That may happen less now, but it still happens to some extent if the court regards it as relevant.

In the case that I mentioned, my constituent took comfort from the fact that, although her evidence was apparently insufficient on its own to bring home guilt on her assailant, she did not face what she would have regarded as the horror of seeing him offered the unqualified certificate of good character to which a not guilty verdict would have entitled him.

If the not proven verdict is such an anomaly, why do juries use it at all? Anyone who observes the jury system over a long period is bound to come to the view that juries display innate common sense and judgment, and that, by and large, jurors get it right on the evidence laid before them. I understand the occasional outpouring of grief of anxiety, or even outright anger, that arises when a not proven verdict is returned, but sympathy and understanding of those emotions should not blind us to the fact that, in serious cases, decisions about guilt and acquittal are taken by the jurors empanelled for that purpose, not by the system of verdicts.

I am by no means convinced that the relatives of someone who has been murdered would feel any more comfortable because a verdict of not guilty rather than a verdict of not proven had been returned. My instinct tells me that, if one can measure such things, they are likely to feel even more distressed.

The hon. Gentleman implied that there was some stigma attached to a not proven verdict. However, I have had several clients who have been admitted—to use a neutral expression—to that verdict, and in my professional experience no one has ever expressed any anxiety about the fact that that was the result of the trial.

Any alteration to the three verdicts available to juries in Scotland cannot be considered in isolation. That is a fundamental weakness in the hon. Gentleman's approach. As I said at the outset, apart from the merits of the verdict, one must have regard to its consequences.

It is not often appreciated that in Scotland a person can be convicted of the most serious charge in the calendar of our criminal law, the charge of murder, on a verdict of eight votes to seven. In such cases, in which the movement of one juror from one side of the argument to the other can have such profound results, the not proven verdict is an important protection in cases in which a simple majority would be sufficient.

Even if the hon. Gentleman were right to suggest that, for the reasons he cites, the not proven verdict should be removed, he could not escape the consequences. He must reconsider the number of jurors, for example, and the majority.

Mr. Home Robertson *indicated assent.*

Mr. Menzies Campbell: It is all very well for the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) to assent from a sedentary position, but I have looked through the Order Paper without seeing the consequential amendments which he is proposing in the event that the amendment to which he has just spoken is carried.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Jerry Wiggin will be moving them later.

Mr. Campbell: Propriety demands that I should not respond to the sedentary intervention from the hon. Member for Bolsover.

Madam Speaker: I did not hear it.

Mr. Skinner: I said that Jerry Wiggin will move the amendments.

Mr. Campbell: The hon. Gentleman has repeated his remark in order that you may not hear it on a second occasion, Madam Speaker. Clearly you have what one might describe as discreet hearing.

Madam Speaker: Judicial deafness.

4 pm

Mr. Campbell: Yes.

I do not wish to detain the House any longer. In many ways, the arguments have been well rehearsed for a long period. A fundamental weakness of the hon. Member for East Lothian's position is his failure to tell the House what the consequences of the amendment would be, or what his proposals would be to deal with those consequences.

Dr. Godman: In defending the verdict of not proven, the hon. and learned Gentleman cannot deny that there is public concern about it. Is he suggesting that it is a rare event and confined to few cases?

Mr. Campbell: No. I do not have the statistics, but no doubt the Minister will be able to advise the House on that. *[Interruption.]* As if in response to that signal, pieces of paper are fluttering about parts of the House. In a sense, the number of occasions in which the verdict is returned is neither here nor there, as the logic of the verdict is the same whether it is returned on a few occasions or a large number.

Reference has been made to the fact that this is an issue to which the House has had its attention drawn on many occasions in the past, and no doubt will again. On this occasion, the effort that the hon. Gentleman has made is thwarted not simply by the nature of his arguments, but by his failure to provide a clear indication of the consequences he expects, and how those should be met.

Mr. Malcolm Chisholm (Edinburgh, Leith): I wish to oppose the new clause moved by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson). In doing so, I join the massed ranks of the judges of Scotland, the Law Society of Scotland, the Faculty of Advocates, the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties and the rape crisis centres and victim support organisations in Scotland—in other words, the majority of informed opinion in Scotland. I could add another esteemed organ of informed opinion in Scotland to that list—the Scottish conference of the Labour party. I hope that their views have some effect on some of my hon. Friends, if not on Conservative Members.

The counter-arguments are driven by the campaign in Hamilton; we all have great sympathy with the circumstances which led to that campaign, and we understand some of the reasons which led to it. But we must stand back from that campaign and say that it is based on a fundamental misconception. The primary and obvious alternative to the not proven verdict is not guilty.

[Mr. Malcolm Chisholm]

Without going into details of the case, if the verdict of not proven had not been given, the verdict would probably have been not guilty.

Hon. Members wishing to abolish the not proven verdict may be saying that those people who receive that verdict should be found guilty—to some extent, that comes through from the Hamilton campaign—but they must realise that we could be faced with a great increase in the number of miscarriages of justice in Scotland if that came about. That would not be acceptable.

Various arguments were used against the verdict by my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian, one of which was the suggestion that a lot of the people concerned were in fact guilty. I found some of his arguments confusing. He went on to say that the verdict places a stigma on the person who is found not proven. As he has already said that most of them are guilty, I do not see how he regards that as a problem.

More fundamentally, I refer to the comments of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who is a distinguished member of the Faculty of Advocates. He said that he has not come across the problem of stigma, and my hon. Friend the Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson) agreed with him from a sedentary position. So I do not think that the problem of stigma is serious. When all is said and done, a not-proven verdict is an acquittal.

Mr. George Robertson (Hamilton): I did not agree with that assertion. Does my hon. Friend agree with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) that rape victims should be happy that such a verdict leaves a stigma behind? After all, that is the only consolation which alleged rape victims can have if acquitted not proven is the verdict at the end of the trial. Is my hon. Friend happy with that?

Mr. Chisholm: I shall discuss the position of rape victims in detail. The main reason that I have been prompted to make this speech is because I have been lobbied by the rape crisis centre in Edinburgh, which is supported by other rape crisis centres in Scotland. I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for not discussing that matter now.

It has been suggested that not proven is a confusing verdict. If we were to get rid of everything that is confusing in the Scottish legal system, we would dismantle quite a lot. More seriously, the not proven verdict can be explained. A judge can explain the options open to the jury, and it is not confusing if it is explained clearly to the jurors and the public at large. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian suggested that a not proven verdict is unsatisfactory for victims, but it is far more satisfactory to victims than a blanket not-guilty verdict.

The rape crisis centre in Edinburgh and the people it represents feel passionately about this issue. Other women's organisations in Edinburgh have also raised the issue with me.

A verdict of not proven is commonly used in rape trials. The consultation document says that, in the High Court, almost 50 per cent. of acquittals for rape are as a result of not proven verdicts. That is a high figure. If such a verdict is abolished, we shall load the dice even more against women in rape trials, and goodness knows the dice are already heavily loaded against them. I do not know the Scottish figures, but I shall table a parliamentary question later. In England in 1993, in only 10 per cent. of reported rapes was a man eventually found guilty. The figure for England in 1985 was 24 per cent., so I shall be interested to know whether it is the same in Scotland.

That illustrates the serious problem that women face in being believed on accusations of rape. If the not proven verdict is taken away and such verdicts in the High Court become not-guilty verdicts, the credibility, honesty and reliability of women will be further called into question. If women know that that verdict is not available, it will not only be a serious problem for victims of rape but women will be discouraged from coming forward with complaints of rape. I therefore cannot express too strongly the fact that rape crisis organisations feel that this is a major issue for them and those they represent.

Mrs. Maria Fyfe (Glasgow, Maryhill): I share my hon. Friend's concern about rape victims. I agree that there are a large number of acquittals, whether as a result of not guilty or not proven verdicts. But does he agree that the real problem is the standard of proof that must be attained, and that, because it is difficult to prove rape to a jury's satisfaction, the not proven verdict tends to be a bolthole for juries who are not satisfied whether a person is positively guilty or not guilty?

Mr. Chisholm: In a sense, my hon. Friend repeats the fundamental driving force of the abolition campaign, which is the assumption that not proven verdicts would become guilty verdicts. I hope that I do not misrepresent my hon. Friend in saying that.

The rape crisis organisations, of all people, should be sensitive to that issue. They know, as everyone knows, that the tiny percentage of guilty verdicts in rape cases does not reflect the number of men who really are guilty. They know that many guilty men walk free. Nevertheless, they want the "not proven" verdict to stay. Obviously, they want more convictions; obviously, they want more people to be found guilty who are guilty, but the two are not mutually exclusive.

Not proven falls on the same side of the divide as not guilty, and therefore the not provens would tend to become not guilty rather than guilty. That is the fundamental argument that must be made in the debate. It is the fundamental misunderstanding of the campaign to abolish it.

Dr. Godman: In cases involving the complaint of rape, would it not be more helpful if women complainers were given the type of protection extended to young children, as they are defined as vulnerable witnesses?

Mr. Chisholm: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. A great many changes must be made in the way in which rape victims are treated in court. In the new phase of the zero tolerance campaign, which has just begun, one of the demands is that there should be a review of the whole judicial system as it impinges on women victims.

Moving to a conclusion, I wish to echo—perhaps an unusual thing for an Opposition Member to do—the words of the consultation document: that the three verdicts were a pragmatic recognition of reality. That is true in rape cases and in many other cases. It represents reality.

Today I spoke to at least one English Member—I shall probably speak to a few more in the next hour or so—who said that he wished that the not proven verdict was available in England because it would solve many of the problems that he has witnessed in the courts when people get off not guilty. He was thinking not of rape cases but of other situations in which it would be better that someone should be found not proven rather than not guilty.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian has not made his case. I think we must say that the case against that verdict is not proven, and we should retain it.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): I shall make a brief speech.

First, I think that it would be wrong to change the position on the statute book, because we claim, properly and rightly, that we like the uniqueness of our Scottish legal system and the not proven verdict is probably one of the most distinctive parts of the Scottish legal system.

I listened with great care to the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who made a speech that surely convinced the House of the huge merit there is in not having full-time Members of Parliament. The advantage of having Queen's counsel come here to give us their experience in the courts is valuable when we discuss something of which few of us have any real experience—what happens in the courts and the pressures on people who appear in court.

The hon. and learned Member made a massive contribution to the retention of the not proven verdict, in a way that only someone with his background and experience could have done. For that we must be thankful. I hope that the House will listen carefully to what he says. It is sad that we have so few Queen's counsel now representing Scottish parliamentary constituencies. In my opinion, we need them, as we need people with other backgrounds and experiences, so that the House can properly and adequately debate the complexities—we are discussing a fairly complex situation—and listen to the experience of people who have travelled the course and understand what is involved.

I hope that the House will reject the new clause.

Dr. Godman: I was struck by some of the things said by the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), especially about cases involving the allegation of rape. I was also much impressed by the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm), and it is his lead that I would follow, especially in respect of complainers in rape cases. In spite of what the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said about the cross-examination of complainers in rape cases, I continue to believe that they are confronted with a terrible ordeal. Despite what he said, I still believe that, in some cases, a complainer has her sexual history trawled through by the counsel for the defence.

I should like more protection to be given to complainers in rape cases. The Under-Secretary of State for Scotland well knows my position. I have argued that the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993—I think, section 33—could be amended so that complainers in rape cases could be defined as vulnerable witnesses and benefit from the use of television links in court cases. Until now, Ministers and other lawyers in the House have rejected such a radical measure, but the definition of a vulnerable witness could be extended to cover citizens with learning disabilities.

There are witnesses in cases who need extra protection. Certainly, complainers in rape cases should be placed in that category. The squalid trawling of sexual history still takes place—I do not care what the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East says. Complainers in such cases undergo a dreadful ordeal. If, by amending the 1993 Act, we could diminish that ordeal, we would all benefit as a nation, not just the complainers and their families. If the difficulties faced by complainers in rape cases were reinforced by the abolition of the third verdict of not proven, I would vote against the measure on those grounds.

4.15 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I did not mean to convey, and I hope that the hon. Gentleman did not understand me to convey, the notion that I was in any way unsympathetic to the way in which the law has developed in relation to the protection of those alleging rape from the sort of analysis of previous sexual history that certainly used to occur. I am entirely in favour of that development. Such analysis occurs much less frequently than it did under the law, even as recently as 10 or 15 years ago.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the hon. and learned Gentleman for his intervention. I know from my experience of the benefit of his company on Standing Committees discussing miscellaneous provisions legislation that he is extremely sympathetic to the position of the complainer in sexual assault cases. I readily acknowledge that the complainer in such cases today does not face the extreme ordeal that complainers faced 10, 15, 20 or 30 years ago. The same holds true for child witnesses in cases involving child abuse, sexual abuse and neglect.

But that is not to say that being in the witness box and being cross-examined by a highly articulate and sometimes sarcastic defence counsel who is keen to trawl through a woman's sexual history are not a terrible ordeal. On that count alone, I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Leith for his contribution. We must do a great deal more for complainers in rape cases to ease the harsh difficulties that they face when giving evidence and to persuade others to come forward to report cases of rape—too many cases go unreported.

To follow on from the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Leith, I think that my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) should take account of the serious reservations that have been expressed about his new clause.

Mr. George Robertson: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) for moving new clause 5. Hon. Members know that I have strong personal views on the subject and, as this short debate has shown, there is a division of opinion in Scotland and even within political parties about the not proven verdict. Therefore, among the Opposition—and, I hope, the Government as well—there will be a free vote at the end of the debate on new clause 5. My views are well known and I shall expand on them,

[Mr. George Robertson]

but my right hon. and hon. Friends are free to vote in whichever Lobby they believe is right and proper, bearing in mind the future reputation of the Scottish legal system.

The first question that must be dealt with in relation to the abolition of the not proven verdict and the three verdicts in Scotland is what those verdicts actually are. There are three verdicts available in Scottish courts, which are known colloquially as not proven, not guilty and guilty. That is what the general populace believe the verdicts to be and, in that respect, Scotland is unique among the judicial systems of the world.

However, those are not the formal titles of the verdicts in the Scottish Office. On 23 June 1993, the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), who will reply to the debate on behalf of the Government, answered my parliamentary question requesting a breakdown of the number of guilty, not guilty and not proven verdicts that were handed down in jury trials in Scottish courts. He answered the question in the following terms:

"High Court:

Acquitted Not Guilty, Acquitted Not Proven, Charge Proved".—[*Official Report*, 23 June 1993; Vol. 227, c. *208.*]

From the point of view of the Scottish Office, which is in charge of the judicial system, the public are wrong. The three verdicts are not guilty, not guilty and not proven; people are acquitted not guilty, acquitted not proven and charge proved.

I believe that there is a case for reducing the number of verdicts to two, and whether they should be charge proved and acquitted not proven is, quite frankly, a matter of sophistry—to coin a phrase that has been in the news recently. The not proven verdict creates problems simply because there are three verdicts, the terms of which cannot even be agreed. The existence of those three verdicts has led to confusion and, I believe, to an undermining of faith in the Scottish criminal justice system.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who is a distinguished member of the legal profession and a Queen's counsel, told the House that there was a wave of adverse public opinion about the not proven verdict—which he asked us to ignore or at least discount—because people were confused. If there is such confusion about the terminology of the verdicts in the courts, it is not surprising that there is some confusion among the general population.

What about those poor people who serve on juries? At the end of trials, the sheriffs or judges often do not make clear the differences between the three verdicts. Sheriff Francis Middleton retired last year after a lifetime in the legal profession. He said that it was extraordinary that, during his time on the Bench, he never felt obliged to explain to juries the difference between acquitted not guilty and acquitted not proven. It is assumed that people know the difference but, as I have shown, the Scottish Office itself uses phraseology that is entirely different from that used by the judges and the sheriffs in court. Therefore, it is scarcely surprising that members of the public, as well as jury members, are confused.

When the award-winning BBC programme "Focal Point" examined the not proven verdict, it found that 48 per cent. of those who had served on juries believed that a not proven verdict was an open verdict and that the cases could be brought back to court. The people we are charging with the responsibility of arriving at verdicts in court cases share the same confusion as the general public about the not proven verdict. That cannot be good for the reputation, integrity and efficacy of the criminal justice system in Scotland.

Why is the not proven verdict an issue in Scotland, and why should it have become a matter of public controversy in Scotland? It is not simply because of the Amanda Duffy case, although that was horrifying and devastating to the individual concerned, to her parents and to members of the local community in my constituency. That was not the issue that brought the concern to the public mind, although the campaigning zeal of the Duffys certainly made it a bigger issue that it might have been.

It was always a matter of controversy. When my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) represented the constituency of Aberdeen, South, he presented a private Member's Bill to abolish that verdict. The controversy rumbled on long before the murder of Amanda Duffy.

There is worry and concern in Scotland about the presumption of innocence. It was interesting that the hon. and learned Friend the Member for Fife, North-East, with all his legal reputation and his affection and admiration for the Scottish legal system, did not find it necessary even to mention the concept of the presumption of innocence that lies at the heart of the legal system in our democracy. Everyone is presumed to be innocent unless he or she is found guilty beyond the bounds of reasonable doubt.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: The hon. Gentleman's attack on me is unjustified. Anyone who are knows anything about the Scottish legal system knows that the presumption of innocence stands at its heart. I would not have thought that, in a debate largely involving Scottish Members, it should be necessary to rehearse something that we know to be fundamental.

Mr. Robertson: The hon. and learned Gentleman knows that it is fundamental, but the contention is that a not proven verdict undermines the presumption of innocence. We can either believe that the presumption of innocence is important and must be protected or we can believe in its limitation by the not proven verdict. We cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: With the greatest respect to the hon. Gentleman, the fact that there are two verdicts of acquittal does not undermine the presumption of innocence or the onus of proof that rests on the Crown throughout. If the onus of proof is not discharged, the jury can choose to say that the individual is not guilty, which is a certificate of credibility, or that the individual is not proven.

Mr. Robertson: It is not the individual, but the case, that is found to be not proven. The individual is presumed to be innocent. It is an acquittal, but not proven.

The hon. and learned Gentleman seems unusually satisfied with the fact that someone can leave a court with less than a full acquittal. That must undermine fundamentally the presumption of innocence because, whatever he says, people leave court with a not proven verdict and a stain on their reputation; the community at large in Scotland then assumes that the individual was

guilty, but there was not enough evidence. The hon. and learned Gentleman and some of my hon. Friends seem to imply that when they talk about other court cases, including rape cases, where people are satisfied with a not proven verdict as it appears to be different from a full acquittal. We should not be satisfied with the differentiation between the two categories, and a not proven verdict certainly undermines the presumption of innocence.

Mr. Bill Walker: The hon. Gentleman said that the people of Scotland take a certain view following a case resulting in a not proven verdict. I suggest that there are cases where someone was found not guilty, but people in Scotland felt that that person was guilty but the case failed because the evidence did not stand up. It does not change attitudes and views. If the hon. Gentleman calls that in aid to support his case, he must realise that such a view is prominent when the feeling is that the Crown has somehow failed to make a case in court against an individual.

Mr. Robertson: If the Crown fails to make the case, the individual deserves to leave the court with a verdict of not guilty, whatever the assumption may be. Not proven is a particular category designed to make sure that a person leaves the court with less than a full acquittal and less than the presumption of innocence with which that individual should enter and leave the court in circumstances where the Crown has not been able to persuade the jury that the individual is guilty. There is a legacy of frustration left behind by victims and their families where all that remains is a mystery. People throughout Scotland feel that the not proven verdict leaves in its wake an air of constant frustration and aggravation that cannot do the system any good.

4.30 pm

I am not alone in that view. My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian quoted the Lord Advocate. I know that we are not permitted to quote his speeches in the House of Lords, but in this instance he was speaking to *Scotland on Sunday*. He is Scotland's senior Law Officer and if the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker)—who has just rapidly departed the Chamber—is influenced by lawyers, presumably the Lord Advocate is someone to whom he should listen.

Despite the fact that the Lord Advocate is a member of the Government, he has a refreshingly high reputation as a Scottish Office Minister. He told *Scotland on Sunday*:

"It is certainly something which, if one were starting out to design a legal system today, starting afresh, I don't think there's any evidence that you would introduce three verdicts. I don't think it is something that has such obvious benefits that one would design it in."

If that is a defence of the not proven verdict, it is mighty weak. The Lord Advocate seems to be suggesting, given the opportunity that the Bill presents, that we should design out the not proven verdict—if it should have been designed in the first place.

More devastating even than the words of the Lord Advocate were those of the Royal Commission on criminal justice in England and Wales. After extensive studies and deliberation, it published the year before last its conclusions on changes that should be made to the English system, bearing in mind some of the advantageous and strong aspects of the Scottish system. In 1992, the Lord Advocate wrote to me:

"Although the remit of the Royal Commission does not extend to Scotland, the Secretary of State has already undertaken to give careful consideration to any recommendations which have a bearing on the Scottish criminal justice system. Due consideration will be given to anything which the Royal Commission may have to say about the Not Proven verdict at that time."

The eyes of the Scottish Office and of the Secretary of State were on the deliberations, and the royal commission was aware that people in Scotland—especially those responsible for such legislation—would study its recommendations carefully. At paragraph 75, the royal commission, chaired by Viscount Runciman, said of Scotland's unique not proven verdict:

"During our deliberations we considered the case for introducing into England and Wales the Scottish verdict of 'not proven'. This is available in Scotland as an alternative to 'not guilty' although it still counts as an acquittal. Most of those who gave evidence to us did not favour such a verdict. We too regard it as an unsatisfactory option, particularly from the point of view of the defendant, who is left with a cloud hanging over his or her reputation. If the jury does not convict, it means that the prosecution have been unable to discharge the burden of proof and the defendant should in our view be entitled to the verdict of not guilty."

Mr. William Ross (Londonderry, East): How many accused people did the hon. Gentleman find during his extensive studies who were dissatisfied with a verdict of not proven being brought against them?

Mr. Robertson: Quite a number. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East said that many of his clients were extremely pleased with a not proven verdict. The people who were happiest were those who were guilty but got off. During the Duffy campaign, the campaigners met a lady who had been charged with resetting a girocheque. The case went to trial and was found not proven. Weeks later, a postman in the same area was charged with resetting girocheques, including those for which the lady had been charged and convicted. The not proven verdict will stay with her. Technically, it was an acquittal, but there will be a stain on her character for the rest of her life. There are people who feel that a stain remains on their character.

I quoted a passage from the report of the Royal Commission on criminal justice. It reflected an emphatic view, which happens to be shared by the hon. Member who represents the Duffy family. It is the view of the royal commission that was set up by the Government to examine in enormous depth all aspects of the English criminal justice system. The royal commission was asked to examine what parts of the Scottish system should be translated to the English system. I repeat its conclusion:

"If the jury does not convict, it means that the prosecution have been unable to discharge the burden of proof and the defendant should in our view be entitled to a verdict of not guilty."

It should not be assumed that, because there was a campaign about a murder one Saturday night in Hamilton town centre, the verdicts of individual courts can also be assumed. We want to eliminate the possibility that juries will go for a cop-out verdict that leaves neither the defendant nor the victim satisfied at the end of the day.

It was suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) that the removal of the not proven verdict would lead to more miscarriages of justice, on the ground that there would be more guilty verdicts instead of acquittal non proven verdicts. I ask my hon. Friend and others who think along those lines whether it would have been better in cases in England if the stain on the characters of the defendants lived on when they were ultimately found to be innocent. Does anyone imagine that the campaign that was mounted on behalf of

[Mr. Robertson]

the Birmingham Six would have continued with the vigour and ultimate success that it reflected if those defendants had been found not proven instead of guilty?

Mr. Menzies Campbell: There would have been one consequence. They would not have spent many years in prison.

Mr. Robertson: Yes, that would have been one consequence. But, at the end of the day, they would not have been proved to be innocent. Does anyone imagine that those defendants would not have been suspected of guilt throughout the campaign? The reality is that, at the end of the campaign, the six were found to be innocent. They were not acquitted not proven, with the reputation that goes with that.

Mr. Chisholm: It is my view that the alternative to not proven is not guilty. The implication behind the argument of those who say that the removal of the not proven verdict will lead to more convictions is that there will be more miscarriages of justice. It is those who want to get rid of the verdict who tend to make the assumption that there will be more convictions.

Mr. Robertson: No, they do not make that assumption. There will be more guilty verdicts and more not guilty verdicts. The third of the verdicts that are not proven will have to be distributed either as guilty or not guilty, or proven or charge proved, whatever terminology is adopted. The campaign is designed to reduce the number of verdicts to two, the number that applies in every other country. It is not directed to decide which of the various terms will be used.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian is not approaching the problem in rape cases in the right way. If there is a problem in rape cases in securing convictions—I am sure that I have the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East on my side—it does not rest with the number of verdicts or the potential for acquittal; the problem rests with the mechanisms by which the evidence is presented, including the standard of proof required. It has nothing to do with the verdicts that are available.

I have responded in writing to the rape crisis centres that have written to me. I have told them that, if they are satisfied with juries going for the not proven cop-out, they are doing a disservice to those who find themselves in court.

Mr. Wallace: It is important that the hon. Gentleman clarifies that point as, unreasonably, other inferences may be drawn from what he said, and from what his hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe) said, when referring to the problem of the standard of proof in rape trials. Is it the policy of the Labour party that guilt must be proved beyond reasonable doubt? That is the standard of proof. Is there any question in rape trials that that standard of proof should be changed?

Mr. Robertson: Of course not. The whole question of how rape trials should be conducted and the admissibility of proof must be looked at separately and distinctly from the verdicts. People who take consolation from there being two acquittal verdicts do not address the serious problem with getting convictions in rape cases. The whole basis of what I am saying today and what I have said before is that the presumption of innocence must remain. The standard of proof must also remain.

If there is a problem in dealing with allegations of rape and convictions in rape cases, it has nothing whatever to do with the verdicts. Indeed, one of the strong criticisms of the not proven verdict is that, increasingly, juries are using it as a cop-out from making a decision. The decision might be for guilty or not guilty, but having the cop-out relieves juries, especially in rape trials, of the obligation of coming to a firm conclusion on what they have heard in court.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East says that my hon. Friend's new clause is defective because there are no consequential amendments and it does not take into account any consequential effects that it would have if passed. The fact is that the issue of the not proven verdict stands on its own. Yes, it may ultimately be connected with the majority that applies in a Scottish jury, but it is not inextricably linked to it. They both stand on their own and they can be adjusted on their own.

I personally believe that, if we were to remove the not proven verdict, ideally we should then change the majority required for a jury to convict; but there is no necessity to do that simply as a consequence of the new clause. The hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace), in trying to undermine my hon. Friend's new clause, is taking the argument—it is a further argument rather than part of exactly the same argument—further.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North, who has departed, having given us the benefit of his wisdom, tells us that we should listen to experts, because on this rare occasion he happens to agree with the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East. The fact that he can ignore practically everything else that the hon. and learned Gentleman says seems to have no consequence at all. I wonder whether the hon. Gentleman is trying to establish a precedent, that we should always listen to the lawyers, that only lawyers can be experts on the law, when he is so eloquent in his praise of the hon. and—I suppose that we have to say "learned"—Gentleman on this occasion.

The Lord Chancellor of England, who does not hold any English legal qualification at all, takes almost exactly the same view. If the legal profession in England is united on one thing, the Lord Chancellor will be determined to alter it, and he has not been put off at all by the massed ranks of the English legal establishment. I think that these arguments do not hold strongly.

Who at the end of the day is still in favour of three verdicts in the Scottish courts? Not the victims, who are left hanging in the air of frustration and mystery that comes at the end of a trial when a not proven verdict is handed down. Certainly not the recipient, unless he or she was guilty and is relieved at having been acquitted, because the recipient is left with a stigma, which, as the English royal commission identified, is impossible for him or her to clear.

The system cannot be satisfied with a situation that undermines the presumption of innocence. The public, who are at best confused by,and at worst hostile to the idea of the not proven verdict, certainly are not in favour of having three verdicts. The legal profession may well be, especially those who are in criminal cases on the defence side, because it is an entirely suitable deployment

of their skills to go for three verdicts instead of just two. Those who were clearly guilty but feel that they have got off could be in favour of it as well.

Much more seriously, juries who do not want to take a straightforward decision based on the case that has been put before them will be pleased to have three verdicts in the Scottish courts. I do not believe that that is a sufficient strength of opinion to weigh against the arguments that have been deployed.

4.45 pm

I accept that there are strong views on the other side of the issue. There are people who believe that three verdicts make our system more flexible, who believe that three verdicts give the jury in a Scottish trial more choice and, therefore, more chances to get it right at the end of the trial, and there are some people in Scotland who firmly believe that we should not bring our legal system into line with those in every other country in the world. They are entitled to that view. I disagree with them, but it is a strong view and many hon. Members have expressed it in this brief debate.

The Opposition will have a free vote, and my hon. Friends who have listened to the debate and others can vote according to their conscience and according to the way in which they feel their opinion should go. I personally will be in the Aye Lobby at the end of the debate.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This has been a useful debate. The hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) suggested that a not proven verdict would result in no further proceedings, but proceedings can be taken against another person—for example, an associate of the person who was the subject of the not proven verdict. That is an important point.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) made a persuasive and convincing speech. Most judges, whether in the sheriff, district or High Court, would agree with the tenor of what he was saying. Certainly, in relation to witnesses in rape cases, what he said was particularly relevant and strongly felt.

I can tell the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) that there have been huge improvements in the treatment of rape cases. The police are now much more sensitive in their dealings with such cases, and great efforts have been made. As the hon. Gentleman knows, steps forward on video evidence have already been taken in legislative provisions. Clauses 17 to 20 of the Bill will facilitate the giving of evidence by other witnesses for whom it would be particularly distressing to recount events in court. No doubt we shall constantly review that matter in future years.

Mrs. Fyfe: We all appreciate that there have been some improvements in the way in which rape cases are conducted in court, but nevertheless we still have to examine the fact that there are a surprisingly large number of acquittals, whether they are acquittals on the basis of a not guilty or a not proven verdict. We cannot believe that so many women are lying, so has the Minister any proposals to undertake further reforms in the way in which rape trials in particular are conducted? If so, could we see them before the Bill is concluded?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Lady raises a rather different point concerning the trauma experienced by witnesses in rape cases or cases of serious sexual assault when, having gone through the process of giving evidence, they find that their evidence is disbelieved. The not proven verdict is a help in such circumstances because it means that the woman will feel that her evidence has not been given in vain and has been registered strongly by the jury in its verdict.

I did once secure the acquittal of a man on a not proven verdict whose case arose out of an episode in the constituency of the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson). I can say only that he was grateful for that verdict, as no doubt would many of the clients of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East have been. Therefore, I would not for a moment suggest that all the representations are one way.

The three-verdict system has been part of the Scottish criminal law for more than two and a half centuries, but we do not regard the not proven verdict as anachronistic. It has been used in a significant number of cases—broadly one fifth of cases in recent times.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Can the Minister confirm that the not proven verdict is available not only to jurors but, in certain cases, to judges? It is available to justices of the peace and sheriffs sitting in summary jurisdiction.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is true.

Our consultation exercise of 1994 cleared up many misunderstandings. Two out of three responses supported the retention of the three verdicts. As the hon. Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) pointed out, a substantial body of opinion supports the not proven verdict, and the balance of opinion in our consultation was strongly in favour of its retention. Its practical usefulness is shown by the fact that it continues to be used regularly; it may also be a more satisfactory acquittal verdict for many victims and witnesses, who feel in such cases that their evidence has not been disbelieved. That partly meets the point made by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mrs. Fyfe).

In the light of the evidence amassed by the consultations, I believe that the new clause should be rejected and that the not proven verdict should be retained.

Dr. Godman: I am grateful to the Minister for showing characteristic courtesy in giving way. A moment ago, referring to my intervention, he suggested that complainants in rape cases were treated more compassionately than hitherto. No one would deny that, and the change has been welcome; but, in referring to clauses 17 to 24, was the Minister suggesting that complainants in such cases would receive protection akin to that given to child witnesses by way of sections 33 to 35 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993? If so, I shall be the first to stand up and cheer him.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Clause 18 will enable a video-recorded statement by a witness who gives evidence and adopts that statement to be admitted as evidence of the facts spoken to in the statement. I realise that not all the measures in the Bill may go as far as the hon. Gentleman would like them to, but the position will be reviewed in due course.

Earlier, I mentioned the case of Madeleine Smith, a young girl charged with poisoning her boyfriend. The jury could not bear the thought of bringing in a guilty verdict and sending to the gallows a vivacious young girl with

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

much to offer in the future. That is why it brought in its not proven verdict—although jury members frankly admitted that they did not believe it.

Mr. Home Robertson: The Minister said that this had been a useful debate. I submit that it will have been useful only if it leads to our removing the anomalous verdict of not proven from the Scottish legal system.

The hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) made an interesting little speech, showing his fawning support for everything that QCs ever say and his keenness on supporting all that is good in Scotland. Given his record of voting to dismantle much that is good in Scotland over the past 16 years, many of us will take that with a heavy pinch of salt.

Mr. Bill Walker *rose—*

Mr. Home Robertson: Must you?

Mr. Walker: As ever, the hon. Gentleman is courteous. Does he not agree that, when his record of voting against measures that he thinks affect Scotland adversely in opposition to his party is equal to mine, he can be as critical as he likes?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. I think that that is one-all.

Mr. Home Robertson: I had forgotten that the hon. Member for Tayside, North was so sensitive. I shall try to be more careful in future.

The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) made some serious points and some lawyer's points: there is, of course, a distinction. He raised a serious point about majority verdicts. He is right: if the not proven verdict were removed from the menu available to juries, it would be necessary to do away with the simple majority that is currently required in Scotland. That is a matter which would need to be addressed in short order.

My complaint about the Government is that they have been dancing around the issue for a long time. They keep finding different excuses for not changing the law. The matter has been considered for them enough. The hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East is right to say that the matter could and should be addressed. However, I found his other points less persuasive.

I appreciate that it must be attractive for a defence counsel to have the long-stop of persuading a jury that there is sufficient doubt to bring in a not proven verdict. The trouble is that there is a fundamental lack of logic in the three-option list of verdicts. One can acquit, convict or produce what can be best be described as a grudging acquittal. However, it is still an acquittal. There is no logic in a verdict of that nature. It simply creates the odd phenomenon of either qualified innocence, which carries a stigma—a principle that I find repugnant—or qualified guilt, which carries no penalty. What earthly use can that serve? It is a major anomaly, which ought to be addressed. The House is the only place where it can be addressed until such time as we have a Scottish Parliament.

My hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Leith (Mr. Chisholm) raised serious concerns about the implications of the abolition of the not proven verdict for rape cases. If there are such concerns, he is right to express them and I appreciate the anxiety that is felt. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) made the point that there are other ways to ensure that there is better quality and that more effective evidence can be laid in such cases to make it easier to get convictions, where they are appropriate.

I feel that the priority must be good justice. The not proven verdict provides no justice for anybody. For that reason, I am inclined to press new clause 5 to a vote.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 117, Noes 325.

Division No. 159] **[5.00 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Bayley, Hugh
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Berry, Roger
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell-Savours, D N
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cousins, Jim
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
Gerrard, Neil
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Grocott, Bruce
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley North)
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Sheffld, H)
Jamieson, David
Jowell, Tessa
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lewis, Terry
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J (Springburn)
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred (Wy'nshawe)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Mike (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
Oliver, Bill
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pope, Greg
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Purchase, Ken
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Spellar, John
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Turner, Dennis
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Worthington, Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mrs. Helen Liddell and
Mr. John Home Robertson.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Alton, David
Ancram, Michael
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (North Dorset)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Batiste, Spencer
Battle, John
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bermingham, Gerald
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brown, M (Brigg & C'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian (Dorset)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'cliff)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Corston, Jean
Cran, James
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'shire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Donohoe, Brian H
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Enright, Derek
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael (Stirling)
Forsythe, Clifford (S Antrim)
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foulkes, George
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Sir A (SW Cambs)
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hardy, Peter
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horder, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Robert G (Harrow W)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (W Hertfdshr)
Key, Robert
Khabra, Piara S
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Kirkwood, Archy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Loyden, Eddie
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mandelson, Peter
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Martlew, Eric
Mates, Michael
Meale, Alan
Merchant, Piers
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll & Bute)
Mitchell, Sir David (NW Hants)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Mudie, George
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
O'Hara, Edward
O'Neill, Martin
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Pike, Peter L
Powell, William (Corby)
Primarolo, Dawn
Randel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Simpson, Alan
Sims, Roger
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Chris (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Touhig, Don
Townsend, Cyril D (Bexl'yh'th)
Tredinnick, David

Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Tyler, Paul
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Wallace, James
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watson, Mike
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Wicks, Malcolm
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wise, Audrey
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Bates and
Mr. Andrew Mitchell.

Question accordingly negatived.

New clause 6

LODGING OF APPEALS

'.—(1) Subject to subsection (3) below, in all criminal proceedings any appeals shall be lodged with the Clerk of Court within fourteen days of the conviction, sentence, judgement, order pronounced, procedure, conduct or issue giving rise to the appeal or on cause shown at such later date as the court may allow.

(2) The appeal shall be in writing, and shall be in such form and subject to such procedure as shall be prescribed by Act of Adjournal.

(3) This section shall not apply to the following appeals—

(a) appeals in terms of section 76(a) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975;

(b) appeals in terms of section 334(2)(a) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975; and

(c) appeals in terms of section 228(a) and (c) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975.'.—*[Mr. McFall.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. McFall: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 6 has been tabled to create a unified and streamlined appeals structure. Currently, there are various types of appeals such as bills of suspension and bills of advocation under section 228 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975. The new clause is designed to harmonise procedures—hence subsection (2) of it. It would also harmonise the form of all appeals and make them much more straightforward and less convoluted. It would allow for all types of appeals to be subject to a single time limit of 14 days as opposed to the present varying time limits. For example, a written intimation of intention of appeal must be lodged within 14 days, a written note of appeal within six weeks and a note of appeal against sentence within two weeks. There is already provision in the Bill for the extension of appeals and our new clause would not touch that.

Sections 76(a) and 334(2)(a) of the 1975 Act deal with appeals from preliminary diets. Those diets deal with matters of competency, relevancy, pleas in bar of trial and any other miscellaneous matters required to be raised. An appeal from a decision at a preliminary diet must be taken two days after such decision and, therefore, the 14-day time limit in the new clause should not be relevant.

Section 228(a) and (c) deal with an appeal on indictment against conviction and against conviction and sentence. Those sections have been excluded because when there is an appeal against conviction, an intimation of intention to appeal is lodged and the specific grounds of appeal are not usually framed until the accused and his representatives receive a copy of the judge's charge to the jury. The 14-day time limit would therefore be inappropriate because the judge's charge to the jury is not normally received until six to eight weeks after the appeal against conviction is marked. With those comments in mind, we offer the new clause for the Government's consideration.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The new clause seeks to introduce a uniform time limit for all appeals, as the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) has suggested, excluding appeals from preliminary diets and solemn appeals against conviction or conviction and sentence. As the drafting of the new clause implicitly acknowledges, however, by excluding certain categories of appeal the time limit which should reasonably be allowed for the lodging of an appeal must depend on the complexity of the particular type of appeal procedure involved.

We believe that to impose a uniform time limit would remove the current flexibility, since the time limit is individually set to suit the nature of each specific appeal procedure. In some cases, a time limit of 14 days would be longer than is necessary and would needlessly delay proceedings; in other more complex appeals, such a time limit would be too short and would result in frequent applications to the court to extend the time limit on cause shown.

It has been suggested that the new clause would enable a single form to be used which would cover all the essential information required and cut the number of forms currently in use. In fact, the form used in each appeal procedure is specified by act of adjournal made by the High Court and the new clause would not change that. It is for the High Court to decide whether a separate form is required for each type of appeal or whether certain types of appeal could use a combined form. It would not be appropriate for that to be prescribed in primary legislation.

I hope that the hon. Member for Dumbarton will acknowledge that it is more appropriate to retain the current flexibility in specifying the time limit individually for each type of appeal procedure and to leave with the High Court the discretion to determine the most appropriate forms of appeal. I urge the hon. Gentleman not to press the new clause.

Mr. McFall: I agree entirely with the Minister's views on the need for the flexibility of the High Court, but there is also a need for simplicity and harmonisation, which is absent at the moment. I ask the Government to consider that in future legislation. Meanwhile, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

New clause 7

VICTIM LIAISON

'.—Every court with criminal jurisdiction shall appoint a victim liaison officer who shall—

(a) contact each complainer and ascertain whether they require—

(i) advice or guidance regarding the procedure adopted by the Court,

(ii) information regarding the progress of the case and its outcome, and

(iii) information regarding support services for victims; and

(b) having ascertained the needs of the complainer, provide such advice, guidance or information as the case may be.'.—*[Mr. McFall.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

5.15 pm

Mr. McFall: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

New clause 7 concerns the need for a victim liaison officer to be appointed by the courts. When we discussed a similar new clause in Committee, we had a positive and constructive debate. We have redrafted the new clause because it was pointed out in Committee that the previous new clause had a certain rigidity about it. In paragraph (b) of the new clause, we have inserted that the victim liaison officer

"having ascertained the needs of the complainer, provide such advice, guidance or information as the case may be.'."

The victim liaison officer would have flexibility, as it was pointed out in Committee that perhaps not everyone involved would wish to be informed about the progress or otherwise of a case.

It is important to recognise in this debate that the Scottish legal system still has a long way to go before it treats victims properly. Information should flow from the justice system to the victim. Information from the police with whom the victim was initially involved, the procurator fiscal's departments and the courts should be sent to the victim and the victim's family. A wide definition of victim should be adopted, simply because the victim might be in hospital, for example, and the victim's family would need to be consulted on certain issues.

On the day the original new clause 6 was moved in Committee, the Minister was kind enough to send all members of the Committee a copy of a Scottish Office research paper on information needs of victims. That information came out only on that day and we had insufficient time—the Minister admitted that he, too, had insufficient time—to consider it in detail. In retrospect, we find that the central message of the report is that victims are still largely being kept in the dark.

In compiling the report, 915 victims of crime were interviewed. It found that the police were the best at telling victims and witnesses what was happening with a case and the courts and the procurator fiscal system were the worst. For example, 47 per cent. of victims were contacted by the police, less than a quarter had any contact with the procurator fiscal and only 13 per cent. were contacted by the courts. Elderly women were much more likely to be kept informed.

The report also found that a third of victims of crimes which were solved were not told that someone had been charged, more than half of the victims of unsolved crimes were not told that no charges had been brought and in more than 40 per cent. of cases in which the victims knew that someone had been charged, they were not told whether the case went to court. A further 58 per cent. had not learnt of the outcome more than 12 months after they reported the crime.

It is important to note that only 10 per cent. thought that they had been kept very well informed of key developments in the case and more than half said that they had been poorly informed. More than 90 per cent. of those who were not told that someone had been charged said that they had wanted that information and 85 per cent. of those interviewed said that they wanted to know the outcome of the case.

The report said that there was

"a significant level of unmet need for information . . . Sometimes victims were unhappy with the way they had been treated by criminal justice agencies. This was sometimes due to 'insensitive handling' rather than a lack of information."

The report is not bad in itself but, as we noted in the debate in Committee, it was undertaken by a London-based firm known as MVA Consultancy. I have examined the articles and memorandum of that company, and it deals mainly with business, planning, transport and so on. In Committee, I asked a question that is worth repeating: why did the Government not give that £34,000 contract to someone in Scotland, especially the Scottish universities, which know a great deal about the subject? That question is still valid.

On page 6 of the report, sections 2.3.10 and 2.3.11 tell us that the company sent out 600 questionnaires but that only 18 per cent. came back. The problem with that 18 per cent. was that the victims had been selected and stratified by the type of offence, and according to whether the crime was detected or undetected. Crimes were also grouped in four broad categories: assault, theft from a house, other theft and other crimes. The categories excluded serious offences such as rape, serious assault and murder; they also excluded victims' relatives and victims of domestic violence.

The authors of the report said that they excluded those individuals because they would have been precognosced by the procurator fiscal, whereas they wanted to interview people who had not been interviewed by the fiscal. What difference would it make to the statistics whether someone had been precognosced by the procurator fiscal, and how could the researchers know the seriousness of a crime when seriousness is a subjective and not an objective concept?

For example, the theft of a handbag from a young girl, if it contained only her make-up and other perfumery, may not be very serious, whereas the theft of a handbag from an 85-year-old lady, when it might contain her life savings, her birth certificate and some memorabilia, would be a serious offence with a traumatic effect on the individual victim. That illustrates the subjectivity of the idea of seriousness.

It is in precisely those cases, such as domestic violence, assault and murder, that we want to know whether the victims or their relatives have been consulted, and we want to know their views. There is a serious deficiency in the research, because it does not contain such information.

Victims and victim support must be taken seriously. The research paper tells us starkly that only 7 per cent. of victims had contact with Victim Support, and that almost 40 per cent. of those who had not had contact said that that was because no one had told them about it. In Committee we asked the Minister what the Government intended to do about that. If I remember correctly, he said that the information would be computerised so that it was readily available in the procurator fiscal's office and could be more widely consulted.

[Mr. McFall]

As the Government have made the idea that they care for victims the centrepiece of the law and order debate, that is an insufficient response. Their own research tells them that the victim is kept in the dark and is a subsidiary element in the whole process. That should not happen. The victim should be of primary concern, and the Government's record on the issue is deplorable.

The new clause asks the Government seriously to reconsider the situation and to tell us what they intend to do for victims in the Scottish criminal justice system. Will they sweep victims' needs under the carpet, as they do at the moment, or will they introduce a more formal set-up, involving Victim Support and other agencies, so that the victim will have assistance from the first minute that he or she is in contact with the police, the procurator fiscal and the courts?

The need for information to be conveyed thereafter, when the victim is away from court, is also paramount. We do not want to read of cases in which victims of rape are told by their neighbours that the accused is out on the streets again. It is the job of the Government and of the courts to ensure that the information is readily available, so the ball lands back in the Government's court. Let us hear the Minister's response and discover what their intentions are. I hope that the Minister will respond to the new clause in a positive and enlightening fashion to the new clause.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Perhaps I should start by declaring an interest, as in the past few days I have joined the ranks of those who have become victims of crime. I cannot honestly say that I have more than a passing academic interest in what happens to the culprit at the end of the day, but I recognise that, for many victims of crime, especially with crimes against the person when there has been an element of personal injury, that is of considerable importance to the victims.

Only in recent times have we as a society started to pay more attention to the victims of crime. I do not advocate that our criminal justice system should be turned into a system of victim vengeance. Vengeance should play no part in the criminal justice system. However, as a constituency Member I know of cases in which victims feel that they have been lost sight of as the case against the accused takes its course, and it is almost forgotten that at the outset there was a victim.

I am thinking of a particular case in which a young constituent was killed in a road accident. The parents found out only some time later that the case had gone to court and what the outcome had been. The aspect of that case which is relevant to the new clause is that, at the outset, during the initial months, the police officer who had been dealing with it had kept in close contact with the bereaved family. But, as such things happen—no one was at fault—the police officer was moved on to another posting and the contact was lost.

When that happens, the important ties that have been established are lost, and the victims tend to go by the board. That is not malicious or even negligent; it is simply that the system does not have a means of keeping people involved, especially in cases where there has been a guilty plea. Obviously, when the plea is not guilty the victim may have to come to court, which presents a different set of circumstances, in which one hopes that proper attention will be paid to him or her. After a guilty plea, however, the victim is often lost from sight as the case is processed. But victims have an interest in knowing how our judicial system, acting on behalf of the community as a whole, has dealt with the perpetrator of the crime against them.

I welcome the general thrust of the new clause. It would be difficult and perhaps burdensome to say that the procedures laid down in it should take place in every single case, because that could lead to unnecessary bureaucracy. However, someone—perhaps someone in the sheriff clerk's office—should be identified as being responsible for ensuring that the interests of the victims of crime are considered. It can be a strange thing for people who have never attended court before, especially if, as victims, they will have to give evidence, to find themselves suddenly faced with the whole panoply of the law. Someone should sit down and talk the witness through the process. After all, the chances are that the witness will not be legally represented, although the accused and the Crown will be represented. Someone from the fiscal's department may have time to explain what will happen, but one suspects that that may not necessarily be the case in a busy sheriff court or the High Court.

There should be someone in the court to say what will happen when the witness goes in, who will be sitting where, and what the procedure will be. If the witness is giving evidence for the Crown, he should be told that he will be asked questions by the procurator fiscal and will then be cross-examined. A liaison officer could simplify the process and allow witnesses some inkling of what they can expect when they go into the court.

Equally, the other two paragraphs in the new clause state that a liaison officer should provide information regarding the progress of the case, or indicate cases in which the accused pleads guilty. The officer should also provide information on victim support services. Agencies and voluntary organisations which cater for the victims of crime are growing in number in our communities. As the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) said in moving the new clause, the number of victims who make use of those organisations is relatively small because of the lack of basic information.

I understand that there will be the usual technical objections to the new clause, but I hope that the Minister will accept the spirit in which the new clause has been moved. There must be proper recognition in society of people who fall victim to crime. A lot of sympathy is expressed at present, but that sympathy must be translated into practical action.

5.30 pm

Mrs. Fyfe: I want to make particular reference to the victims of rape. In the debate on new clause 5, the Minister seemed to believe that the retention of the not proven verdict went a long way towards satisfying the needs of rape victims. The question of not going into the sexual history of the victim should be applied in all cases—the judge should not be free to decide whether to do so.

It is not only a matter of protecting vulnerable witness, although that was a valuable point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). Counsel for the defence again and again ask questions relating to the clothing of the complainant, or

the fact that she was walking alone at night. Those issues should not be raised in an attempt to defend the accused and to try to put doubt in the minds of the jury. It is not a question of departing from the standard of the case being beyond reasonable doubt. I am referring to the issues that can be raised in court.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady has had an opportunity to speak to new clause 5. We are now on new clause 7, which deals with victim liaison; she must address her remarks to that subject.

Mrs. Fyfe: I am sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was trying to use that subject to lead into new clause 7. If we believe that victims need more support and help, new clause 7 could be of immense benefit. Therefore, I hope that the Minister will support the new clause. He must be willing to discuss the problems that victims—I am referring particularly to rape victims—can experience.

I felt that I had to relate the Minister's remarks on new clause 5 to new clause 7 because it is important that he not only supports this new clause but goes further and discusses the needs of rape victims with rape crisis centres. He must see what else can be done to ensure that trials are conducted as fairly as possible and that victims are fairly represented so that a proper verdict is delivered. After all, that is the most important thing to a victim.

An organisation based in Glasgow called Families of Murder Victims has raised with me the fact that when a loved member of a family is murdered, no one explains anything to the relatives of the victim. They do not get a transcript of the trial, which is offered free to the defendant, and they are often made to sit in the same room as the family and friends of the person accused of the murder. Families of Murder Victims feel that relatives get a raw deal, and I hope that the Minister will refer to that point.

Dr. Godman: I was only too happy to add my name to the new clause, although I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) will allow me to say that a more appropriate title might well have been "Witness Liaison Officer" or "Witness Adviser". We have seen a remarkable improvement in the assistance given to witnesses, particularly those whom I have long defined as vulnerable witnesses. New clause 7 would strengthen that most welcome development.

The Minister will surely agree that clause 18, while providing a most welcome step forward, falls far short of the provisions contained in sections 33 and 35 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993. I am sure that the Minister was not attempting to compare clause 18 favourably with the two sections of the 1993 Act, but he will surely agree that much more assistance needs to be given to vulnerable witnesses.

Section 33 of the 1993 Act allows for the appointment of a commissioner—who could act as a witness adviser or a safeguard—who must act as an independent evidence-gatherer. Similarly, section 35 of the Act allows for a child's evidence to be given by television link. It is essential that the sheriff's office has a victim liaison officer—or witness liaison officer—where closed circuit television is used. I have looked at the installation in Greenock, and incidentally I am pleased to say that—judging from a recent letter I received from the Minister—it seems that the installation is to be permanent. That will be most welcome in Greenock, if not in Paisley.

If further use of television screens is to be made, a young witness would benefit from the advice of a "safeguarder" or adviser as envisaged in new clause 7. That will be extremely helpful whether the case takes place under what I call the old-fashioned proceedings or, under sections 33 and 35 of the 1993 Act, evidence is taken outwith the court room.

The Minister should have some sympathy for the new clause. As envisaged, the development of witness advisers could be as welcome and as radical as those sections of the 1993 Act, in which the Minister played an important role. By and large, the interests of child witnesses are now dealt with compassionately, and sheriffs and judges treat such vulnerable witnesses sympathetically. But that more sensible and compassionate approach does not deny the usefulness of the officer envisaged in the new clause.

Although most courts take care of the interests of vulnerable witnesses, how many sheriff courts and courts used by the High Court are in every sense barrier-free for the visually handicapped? I should have thought—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is an experienced parliamentarian. He is rather stretching this new clause.

Dr. Godman: I am sorry that you say so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because an adviser could be in a powerful position to advise disabled witnesses, particularly where there are no facilities for that person to give his or her evidence in a comfortable frame of mind. In numerous courts the visually handicapped are handicapped as witnesses, and the same applies to people confined to wheelchairs. Such witnesses would benefit enormously from advice given by an adviser as defined in new clause 7. I fail to see why you brought me to order on that point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I did so simply because the hon. Gentleman was out of order. He was seeking information on exactly how many courts had this, that and the other. Although it may be appropriate for an adviser to seek such information, it is hardly appropriate for the hon. Gentleman to develop that line of argument this afternoon. I should be grateful if he would desist from doing so.

Dr. Godman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Such an adviser could play an important role in helping disabled witnesses. He could certainly help complainers in rape cases by advising on the likelihood of the court trawling through their sexual history on cross-examination. They should be regarded as vulnerable witnesses and a victim or witness liaison officer, as proposed in the new clause, could be of considerable help to complainers or child witnesses in such cases.

Another group who should be assisted by such an adviser is people with learning difficulties. I have always argued that they should be treated as vulnerable witnesses. It must be an awful ordeal for such people to go into a court of law. Some manage better than others, but with the help of an adviser the difficulties experienced by such people in attending and giving evidence in our courts would be dramatically reduced.

There is therefore a strong case for such an adviser to be employed by the courts' administration solely for the purpose of easing the difficulties faced by vulnerable witnesses.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Although we debated this issue thoroughly in Committee, I am happy that we

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

have returned to it today, because it is extremely important. It gives me an opportunity to repeat the Government's commitment to ensuring that victims are dealt with correctly and sensitively.

Victims have an important place in our criminal justice system, which must be fully recognised. If victims were to lose faith in how the system treated them or delivered justice, fewer would report crimes or act as witnesses. That in turn would reduce the system's effectiveness and capacity to identify offenders and bring them to justice.

I have much sympathy with the sentiments behind the new clause. All coherent and sensible measures to improve the position of victims are to be welcomed. But the statutory path suggested by the new clause is the wrong one to follow. The right path is the one on which we have already embarked, which builds on much existing good work being carried out by the agencies of the criminal justice system, based on research and pilot projects.

5.45 pm

Unlike the new clause, our support for victims is not only court-based. Under the justice charter, police forces are expected to put victims in touch with local victim support schemes if the victim so wishes, and all police forces have an official policy to provide the necessary information to victims. Equally, once a trial is over, the efforts of Victim Support (Scotland) will continue to support victims who still need emotional support. Government funding to Victim Support (Scotland) has increased enormously from £600 in 1985 to £878,000 in 1994 and it is being increased by a further 11 per cent. this year up to £1 million.

I was specifically asked in Committee about action that we shall take in the light of the research report. I say to the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) that the contract for research on the information needs of victims was put out to selective tender and was won by MVA in December 1993 for a total of more than £34,000, which has now been paid in full. Most of the research commissioned by the Scottish Office's criminal research office is undertaken by Scottish universities. That research required expertise in what could be described as "market research"—sending out questionnaires to large numbers of individuals. MVA was considered to have the expertise available as well as previous experience in Scottish criminal justice. I cannot say at this time who else submitted proposals for that research, but I shall make inquiries and write to the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for allowing me to intervene. He mentioned research. Does he accept that, as I said earlier, the crimes that were excluded from paragraphs 2, 3, 10 and 11 included those such as rape and other sexual assault? It is on precisely such areas that we need information. As a result, does he accept that that research is deficient in terms of what we do in the future?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Any research is not necessarily complete, but it must be used as a basis for going forward. If further evidence is required we could usefully look into that. I shall refer the hon. Gentleman's point to the Minister of State responsible.

The report makes it clear that there is an unmet demand for more information, and we acknowledge that there is definitely room for improvement. To construct a system to cope effectively, speedily and comprehensively, and at a reasonable cost, with the provision of more information to victims, as outlined in the report, is no easy task, nor can it be done overnight, but since the report's publication we have made a number of initial moves.

First, the report suggested that local police guidelines on the provision of information could be operated much more consistently and we are pursuing that matter with chief police officers in Scotland to see how they could achieve greater reliability and coverage in keeping victims informed of progress. Secondly, we have accepted an invitation from Victim Support (Scotland) to participate in a steering group formed to consider proposals for pilot projects targeted on supporting victim witnesses in court.

The Crown Office obviously has a leading role to play in providing case-specific information at certain stages of the process. The Lord Advocate and his officials will proceed in relation to aspects of the report that fairly fall to them and to procurators fiscal.

I strike a note of caution. The research findings clearly highlighted the fact that the majority of victims definitely want to be well informed about case-specific information, general criminal justice procedures and contact points for assistance. However, it is clear from the report that a range of options is available for providing that additional information, which might work differently in practice.

Under, for example, the first option, victims of serious offences and vulnerable witnesses would be given information at key stages but other victims would have to telephone for information. That is attractive, as it seeks to target the provision of information, but, as the report says, that gives no guarantee that the victims who most need or want it would automatically receive what they require.

The second option, whereby victims would opt into a system of automatic information provision, largely gets round the problem of victim selection associated with the first option. However, as with the third option, whereby all victims would automatically be kept informed, it is questionable whether it would be a wise use of taxpayers' funds to place no limits on the supply of information, especially where the case concerned might be minor. In addition, the third option takes no account of those victims who do not want information, who may simply want to put the experience of the crime behind them.

All those considerations need to be given careful thought. Even Victim Support (Scotland) remains in the process of digesting the report and reaching an opinion about the options.

I have said to the hon. Member for Dumbarton that we will carefully consider all the issues, and consider whether it is necessary to prepare a leaflet for victims so that they should be better informed.

To summarise, I must restate our opposition to the new clause. Although the sentiment is laudable, the amendment is misguided. Better victim liaison will not be achieved by placing such a statutory duty on the courts. Instead we should pursue, as the Scottish Office is already, a flexible and co-ordinated approach throughout all agencies of the criminal justice system, working in close contact with Victim Support (Scotland) and other voluntary organisations.

With those assurances in mind, I hope that the hon. Member for Dumbarton will not press his amendment.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for his reply, but a deficiency remains. *[Interruption.]* The Minister has kindly replied to me, so I would not say that.

There is a deficiency in the Government's approach because the figures that stand out are that only 7 per cent. of victims had contact with Victim Support (Scotland). What will the Government do to bring victims far more into the mainstream regarding the courts? Will he reflect on the fact that two out of every five victims who were contacted by Victim Support (Scotland) said that they had not contacted victim support because no one had told them of its existence?

If there is a dearth of information in the first place, the Minister's suggestion that a leaflet be produced for victims should be implemented immediately. That is important.

The Minister said that the new clause was inflexible because it imposed a statutory duty. However, subsection (b) offers flexibility because we say in that,

"having ascertained the needs of the complainer,"

the victim liaison officer would

"provide such advice, guidance or information as the case may be."

Flexibility is therefore built into the new clause.

I took the arguments made by hon. Members. For example, the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said that someone from, perhaps, the procurator fiscal's department should act as a victim liaison officer. At the moment, each department is charged with keeping the victim informed voluntarily, but it does not happen. There must be some co-ordination. The victim liaison officer, being appointed by a court with criminal jurisdiction, would satisfy that demand. It would allow for someone to sit down and talk to witnesses and victims.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) said, the nomenclature of a witness liaison officer may be more appropriate. Regardless of nomenclature, there is a need for victim support.

The Government's lack of financial support is reprehensible. Victim Support (Scotland) has provided briefings to us as Members of Parliament. One briefing mentioned the need for fair compensation for crime victims by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. It is absurd that the board would still award £1,000 for a child who has been sexually assaulted, compared with £1,250 for an adult who suffers a dislocated finger.

The Government's attitude to that is topsy-turvy. It is time that they entered the real world. The least that the Minister should do is to take the issue seriously so that victims receive the message from the debate that they do have a place in the criminal justice system. The Opposition suggest that they have a primary place; the Government have relegated them to the second and third division. We consider that their needs are much more important than that, and should be considered.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The Committee divided: Ayes 219, Noes 259.

Division No. 160] **[5.55 pm**

AYES

Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beggs, Roy
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cummings, John
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Roseanna
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hodge, Margaret
Home Robertson, John
Howarth, George (Knowsley North)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Shef'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll & Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Rt Hon John (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Mike (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)

Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ross, William (E Londonderry)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, Chris (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Ms Estelle Morris and
Mr. Geoffrey Hoon.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (North Dorset)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brown, M (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian (Dorset)
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'cliff)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Cran, James
unninghan, Roseanna
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A (SW Cambs)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Horden, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hughes, Robert G (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (W Hertfdshr)
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (NW Hants)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Powell, William (Corby)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D (Bex'yh'th)
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George

Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (MaccTld)
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Derek Conway and
Dr. Liam Fox.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 10

JUDICIAL EXAMINATION

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 166, in page 6, line 40, leave out 'and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also the following amendments: No. 167, in page 6, line 42, at end insert—

' ; and

(c) in paragraph (b) after the words "allegedly made" there shall be inserted "and in summary of the evidence upon which the Crown intends to proceed.".'.

No. 168, in page 7, line 3, at end insert—

'(3A) In subsection (4)—

(a) leave out the words "With the permission of the sheriff"; and

(b) after the words "accused may" there shall be inserted "object to any question asked by the prosecutor and".'.

Mr. McFall: I draw particular attention to amendments Nos. 167 and 168. Amendment No. 167 would ensure that an accused person who is subject to judicial examination should have access to a summary of information upon which the Crown is basing its case. At a judicial examination, the prosecutor can ask an accused person about an extra judicial admission only if the accused has received a copy of the written record of the confession.

Under the terms of the Bill, the prosecutor will be able to ask questions designed to elicit an admission. Amendment No. 167 would redress the balance between the prosecutor and the accused in judicial examination by ensuring that such questions can be asked only if the accused has also received a copy of the summary of evidence. If the prosecution has the right and the entitlement to ask questions in order to elicit an admission, surely the defence has the right to object to that. The defence should know the facts upon which the prosecution is relying and, with that in mind, we tabled amendment No. 167.

Under the terms of the Bill, the defence can say something only with the permission of the sheriff and the accused can be asked questions for the purpose of clarification only with the permission of the sheriff. Amendment No. 168 would eliminate the need to ask the sheriff's permission and add the accused's right to object. In that spirit, I commend the amendments to the House.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I am afraid that I fail to see the need for amendments Nos. 166, 167 and 168, despite the explanations offered by the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall). The main amendments that the Bill will make to the judicial examination process are limited to trying to ensure that the prosecutor can ask the accused a simple question to which the accused can give a straightforward answer. That being the case, I do not see why we need to change any of the fundamental aspects of the process.

It would be entirely premature to provide a summary of evidence at judicial examination stage. The judicial examination takes place at a very early stage of the process, soon after the accused has been arrested and charged. At that stage, the prosecution will often not be in a position to give a full summary of how it intends to proceed—the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) will know that from his experience as an advocate-depute. I do not believe that there would be any advantage in the accused having such a summary at that stage, and there could be no question of the Crown being limited to proceeding only on the basis of such evidence as may be available at the time of the judicial examination.

I also cannot see the advantage of amendment No. 168, which would amend clause 10 by providing an enhanced role for the accused's solicitor in the process of the judicial examination. A clear duty is placed on the sheriff by the statute to ensure that the procedure is undertaken in a manner that is fair to the accused so that he or she understands fully what is being asked. To tinker with that system by introducing a more extensive role for the legal representative of accused persons in objecting to the questions put to the accused by the prosecutor would be to alter the nature of the process unnecessarily.

In the event that it is thought that anything said by the accused in the course of a judicial examination has been extracted by unfair or improper means—despite the fact that the procedure is under the control of the sheriff—it would be open to the defence, at either a first or preliminary diet, or indeed at the trial itself, to challenge the evidential value of the judicial examination. I believe that there are perfectly adequate safeguards for the accused, and, in those circumstances, I urge that the amendments be withdrawn.

6.15 pm

Mr. Menzies Campbell: I understand the practicalities of asking the prosecution to provide all the details of the evidence upon which it intends to rely. However, the amendment is not exclusive, in the sense that the prosecution would be debarred in some way from relying on other information at another stage. It occurs to me that there may be an imbalance, in that the accused is expected to state his defence but the prosecution is not obliged to state the terms of the prosecution, other than the bald narrative of the charge no doubt contained in the petition warrant.

Therefore, the Minister should consider the fact that at that stage the accused is obliged to come clean—to put it colloquially—but, apart from the terms of the charge, the prosecution is not asked to do likewise. Looking at the matter from the point of view of fairness—which is always the ultimate test in procedures of this kind—we should ask whether it might be possible to provide the accused with something along the lines suggested by the amendment. The Minister knocked the amendment aside rather baldly, but I think that it deserves further and more detailed consideration than he felt able to give it.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: With the leave of the House, I will answer the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell). The questions asked of

[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton]

the accused will be very simple and straightforward. The amendment is difficult because it requests a summary of evidence at a time when the prosecution may not have all the evidence readily available. If it is a serious case, such as a murder case, additional information may become available later in the course of the investigation and we must remember that judicial examination takes place at a very early stage in the proceedings.

For those reasons, it is not appropriate or wise to impose a cumbersome process upon the prosecution. We must balance the interests of justice with fairness to the accused, and I suggest to the hon. and learned Member that the effects of the amendments would not be in the best interests of justice.

Mr. Campbell: I shall intrude upon your discretion and respond briefly to the Minister's comments if I may, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Minister does not understand that there is no exclusivity. The amendment does not say that, having stated its case, the Crown could never go beyond the terms of that case in the future.

I do not think that the Minister has directed his attention to the fact that a person is arrested and charged with an offence only because there is at least prima facie evidence from corroborated sources as to his or her guilt. To that extent, by the time that an individual appears at the judicial review, the prosecution must know the evidence on the basis of which it has been thought fit to charge that individual.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I do not think that what the hon. and learned Gentleman says is in the interests of justice for the simple reason that, if the prosecution puts forward its case at a very early stage and it then emerges that there is a great deal more evidence that it was unaware of and the case involves other matters as well, the defence could argue in the trial that the prosecution did not put forward the case fully and properly at the time of the judicial examination. The prosecution may not have been in a position to do that. The hon. and learned Gentleman would be imposing upon the prosecution a cumbersome and onerous process which would not be in the best interests of justice.

Mr. McFall: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 13

FIRST AND PRELIMINARY DIETS IN SOLEMN PROCEEDINGS

Amendments made: No. 51, in page 9, line 6, leave out '76' and insert '67'.

No. 52, in page 9, line 32, leave out 'discharge' and insert 'postpone'.

No. 53, in page 10, line 17, leave out 'discharge' and insert 'postpone'.

No. 54, in page 10, line 25, leave out 'discharge' and insert 'postpone'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 14

INTERMEDIATE DIET IN SUMMARY PROCEEDINGS

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 55, in page 10, leave out lines 29 and 30.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 56 and 58.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Clause 14 provides, among other things, for intermediate diets to be mandatory in summary proceedings. The amendments ensure that the Secretary of State will have the power to introduce the new diets gradually, court by court and, if appropriate, to disapply the provisions in particular courts.

Gradual introduction will permit monitoring and evaluation of the diets to be carried out before they are introduced throughout Scotland. If it is deemed appropriate, certain courts may not be required to hold such diets if it is clear that they would be of no practical value.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 56, in page 10, leave out from beginning of line 42 to end of line 2 on page 11.

No. 57, in page 11, line 7, leave out 'discharge' and insert 'postpone'.

No. 58, in page 11, line 16, at end insert—

'(4) The foregoing provisions of this section shall have effect as respects any court prescribed by the Secretary of State by order, in relation to proceedings commenced after such date as may be so prescribed, with the following modifications—

(a) in subsection (1), for the word "may" there shall be substituted "shall, subject to subsection (1E) below,"; and

(b) after subsection (1) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(1E) If, on a joint application by the prosecutor and the accused made at any time before the commencement of the intermediate diet, the court considers it inappropriate to have such a diet, the duty under subsection (1) above shall not apply and the court shall discharge any such diet already fixed.

(1F) The court may consider an application under subsection (1E) above without hearing the parties.".

(5) An order under subsection (4) above shall be made by statutory instrument, which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 17

EXCEPTIONS TO THE RULE THAT HEARSAY EVIDENCE IS INADMISSIBLE

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 59, in page 14, line 45, leave out "other".

Clause 17 is one of four clauses introduced in Committee to implement the recommendations contained in a report by the Scottish Law Commission, "Evidence—Hearsay Evidence in Criminal Proceedings", which was published on 23 February.

The amendment arises from our further consideration of the clauses. It will permit any party to the proceedings in which a hearsay statement has been admitted to seek the leave of the court to lead additional evidence. Clause 17(9) currently restricts that right to any party other than the party leading the evidence of a hearsay statement.

I hope that the amendment will accordingly be welcomed by the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 21

EVIDENCE OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 60, in page 16, line 46, after 'material' insert

'deriving from human beings or animals'.

In fairness to the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I should say that the amendment is a concession to him, as I resisted everything else he proposed, particularly on Lockerbie. The hon. Gentleman wanted a better definition of "biological". We have responded to that, as he had a valid point. We have made it beyond doubt that references to biological material do not include material of botanical origin, such as drugs, but refer only to material deriving from human beings or animals. That is the clarification that the hon. Gentleman sought, and I commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 32

COMMENT BY PROSECUTOR ON ACCUSED'S FAILURE TO GIVE EVIDENCE

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 169, in page 26, line 4, at end insert—

'(2) The prosecutor shall only be permitted to comment on the failure of the accused to give evidence in any proceedings against him if—

(a) the accused has intimated a special defence of alibi or incrimination; or

(b) the court has upon application being made agreed that it is appropriate in the circumstances of the case that the prosecutor should be entitled so to comment.'.

The amendment relates to clause 32. It concerns the right of the prosecutor to comment on the defence's failure to give evidence. As was mentioned in Committee, it is an important measure, which has drawn sharp criticism from the legal fraternity.

When I mention the legal fraternity, perhaps I should mention one of its members who advises all parties in the House, irrespective of stance—Michael Clancy of the Law Society. We value Michael's assistance greatly over the months and years. Michael has been ill recently, but he is recovering, and today he was in the Box under the Gallery watching the deliberations. Both sides of the House are grateful to Michael for the assistance that he has provided. I know that the Minister, in particular, agrees with me, but it is nice to have recorded in *Hansard* the assistance that he gives all parties in the House, not least on the issue of the right of the prosecution.

The Law Society, among others, feels strongly about the issue. The amendment seeks to circumscribe the occasions when the prosecutor can comment on the defence's failure to give evidence. It has been suggested in the press in Scotland by eminent legal writers that the scales of justice are being tipped in favour of the prosecution rather than the defence by the introduction of the clause. The Opposition agree with that view, and ask the Government seriously to consider the issue so that the scales of justice are finely balanced again, and are neither in favour of the prosecutor or the defence.

Without the amendment, the prosecutor will be able to comment on the accused's silence on a particular issue. That will give the prosecutor more power and leeway than the judge has at present. That cannot be in the interests of fairness and the law.

We should consider what could happen in the case of an over-zealous prosecutor. The point was drawn to the attention of the Minister before, but he gave an inadequate answer. If there is an over-zealous prosecutor, the judge could comment on that, but by commenting on it, he would be bringing to the attention of the jury the fact that the prosecutor mentioned it in the first place, so the judge would be reinforcing it. It would be in the mind of the jury throughout the trial and when it decided the verdict. That is an important point that I would like to get across to the Minister in the amendment.

There is a considerable amount of case law relating to the right of the court to comment on the accused person's silence at trial. Those cases clarify the circumstances when the judge may comment. The prosecutor should be subject to the same restrictions as the judge. The amendment would ensure simply that the prosecutor's right to comment is no wider than that of the judiciary.

In September, the Government published a consultation paper:

"The right to silence, judicial examination and evidence of previous convictions".

It was a hastily produced document. One has it in mind that it was based on the position in England and Wales, and the Government sought to align the position in Scotland with that in England and Wales. I submit to the Minister that the legal system in Scotland is unique, that we do not need to copy England and Wales, and that the Government undertook a hasty measure when they produced their document last September.

Judges have been drawing attention to the accused's silence since 1918 in the case of Brown *v.* Macpherson, when Lord Justice General Strathclyde said:

"the judge may, and in my opinion should, in exceptional cases comment upon the fact . . . that an accused"

failed to give evidence or go into the witness box.

There are other cases since that time have developed that case law such as Scott *v.* Hon. Member Advocate in 1946, Stewart and others *v.* Hon. Member Advocate in 1980 and McLean and Canning *v.* Hon. Member Advocate in 1993. So the judge can comment on cases.

The law is clear that judicial comment can only be made when special defences of alibi or incrimination have been entered,, where it is clear that the accused knows certain facts unknown to anyone else or where inference of guilt can be drawn from the unanswered Crown case. If the judge is constrained by case law to comment on the failure of the accused to enter the witness box, why will not the prosecutor be similarly constrained? Why are the Government offering the prosecutor an excess not available to the judiciary? Such a constraint would help to balance the scales of justice.

The right to silence has existed more than 100 years, since the Criminal Procedure Act 1887—so why in 1995 are the Government overturning that right and tipping the balance in favour of the prosecution? The Government have no credible case, and it ill behoves them to proceed without adequate explanation. It is important to maintain public confidence in Scotland's criminal justice system,

[Mr. McFall]

and the Government's proposal would be a small step to reducing it. It would not serve the interests of justice, and I ask the Government to reconsider.

6.30 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The hon. Gentleman was right to pay tribute to the Law Society, which has been diligent in making representations to all parties, and to Michael Clancy—for whose help to right hon. and hon. Members we are most grateful. We wish him a speedy recovery.

Clause 32 removes the prohibition on the prosecutor's right to comment on the failure of the accused to give evidence on his own behalf. We have promoted that change because we believe it right that the prosecutor should be able to draw to the jury's attention, with the proper degree of care and balance, what may be an important element of the case before them. The clause gives the prosecutor the right to comment in all such situations. That follows the recommendations of the Thomson committee.

We believe that the prosecutor can be relied on to use the discretion appropriately and sparingly. To emphasise that, my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate has undertaken to issue guidance to procurators fiscal on the use of the right to comment. The system provides perfectly adequate safeguards against the possibility of the prosecutor going too far in his comments. The prosecutor's right to comment will be no wider than that of the judge. If the prosecutor were to go too far—I emphasise our belief that that will be very much the exception—it will be open to the judge to draw that to the attention of the jury in his charge, and to direct them accordingly.

Mr. McFall: If the prosecutor is over-zealous, it will be the judge's place to correct him—but by doing so, the judge will have brought the situation to the jury's attention on two occasions. Rather than allow such flexibility for the prosecutor, is it not necessary to issue guidelines to which prosecutors could work? Without them, there will be no adequate safeguard.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: That is the purpose of the guidance that my noble and learned Friend will issue to prosecutors, which will be of substantial assistance.

In cases of defences of alibi and self-defence, the judge's ability to comment is not limited to the examples quoted by the hon. Gentleman of the kinds of situation in which comment might be made. In the final analysis, it will be open to the accused to seek leave to appeal against any ensuing conviction or sentence if it is thought that the prosecutor's comments might have led to a miscarriage of justice. Neither limiting the right to comment to situations where special defences have been intimated nor requiring the court to take a decision in advance of the prosecutor commenting on the failure to give evidence is a sensible way to proceed.

Even if there were some merit in that approach, I am unclear why it should be thought appropriate to list only the special defences of alibi and incrimination in this amendment, and exclude the other special defences, including that of self-defence. Seeking to introduce the unusual and imperfect procedures in the amendments would not add anything to the safeguards already available to the accused. I urge the hon. Gentleman to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: On Second Reading, I said that I did not share misgivings that a prosecutor might be entitled to comment on the absence of the giving of evidence by an accused person. From my own experience of prosecuting and defending, if that is not done expressly, there is often an opportunity for the prosecutor to comment at least by implication.

I was not as persuaded as the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) of the need to be anxious about the Bill's proposal. However, that reflects a substantial and radical innovation that is contrary to previous procedure, which may have consequences for the freedom of the subject. In those circumstances, there is a duty to be certain that innovation will be properly restricted.

My anxiety about the Minister's response is illustrated by an expression coined by Mr. Melvin Belli, a famous United States attorney—or trial lawyer, to use the vernacular. He said, "If you let a skunk into the jury room, you should not be surprised if it creates a smell." That is a colourful way of saying that, if evidence or comments are produced before a jury, one can hardly be surprised if the jury takes account of them—no matter how strict the instructions given by the trial judge to disregard them.

Although the Minister may have a point in respect of certain technicalities, the principle behind the amendment is of ensuring that an innovation that may have consequences for the freedom of the subject should be regulated by Parliament rather than by the direction or instruction of the Lord Advocate, however well-motivated and conceived to be in the public interest. That is a sound and substantial principle, and I hope that the Minister will give it further consideration and not reject it on technical grounds. That fundamental issue ought to be properly considered.

Mr. McFall: I am grateful for the comments of the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell), who mentioned an expression coined by an American lawyer. I used the same analogy in Committee, but credited it to Lionel Daiches, QC. Perhaps it has done the rounds. The point is that the Government's proposal gives the prosecutor another bite at the cherry.

We know about miscarriages of justice, the controversy surrounding Parliament's intentions, and the recent debate in Scottish courts. Parliament should make its voice clear in the Bill. In another place, Lord Hutchinson—an eminent lawyer—referred to the Home Secretary's implied abolition of the right to silence as an act of vandalism:

> "To make a comment of that kind is to ask the jury to give the silence some evidential value; that is, to add to the prosecution case. That is why both Royal Commissions in England pointed out that that was mischief . . . The whole basis of criminal law, both in Scotland and in England, is that no defendant should ever be put in that position."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 12 January 1995; Vol. 560, c. 414.]

Those eloquent words go to the heart of the issue and of the amendment. We believe that they should be enshrined in the Bill.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall respond briefly. I met Melvin Belli at a Canadian university. He said that he would speak only if he were provided with moose and pemmican. He was indeed a colourful figure.

I think that the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) is somewhat over-concerned. At least one judge in another place has expressed support for the change that we propose. He agreed with the Government that it was a sensible move. It seemed anomalous that no comment by the prosecution was allowed when virtually every other party to the proceedings was not so inhibited. I believe that, when the judge was practising at the Bar, the hon. and learned Member for Fife, North-East (Mr. Campbell) sometimes appeared as his junior.

We believe strongly that the recommendation of the Thomson committee, which has been the subject of consultation, should be enacted. I have no doubt that its implementation and operation will be reviewed in due course. The Lord Advocate's guidelines will spell out the sort of comment that may be made and the circumstances in which it would be appropriate.

Mr. Menzies Campbell: Will the guidelines be published?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall make inquiries. It is better that the hon. and learned Gentleman should be given the correct answer within a few hours rather than an immediate response, which may or may not be correct.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for that response. If he makes inquiries, will he write to us?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Most certainly.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 211, Noes 246.

Division No. 161] **[6.40 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Clapham, Michael
Clark, Dr David (South Shields)
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Corbett, Robin
Corston, Jean
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Roseanna
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Denham, John
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Ewing, Mrs Margaret
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hodge, Margaret
Home Robertson, John
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley North)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Sheff'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll & Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon John (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
O'Brien, Mike (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Rowlands, Ted
Ruddock, Joan
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, Chris (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Watson, Mike
Welsh, Andrew
Wicks, Malcolm

Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and Mr. Joe Benton.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (North Dorset)
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Banks, Robert (Harrogate)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brown, M (Brigg & C'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian (Dorset)
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'ire)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A (SW Cambs)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Rt Hon David (G'dford)
Hughes, Robert G (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (W Hertfdshr)
Key, Robert
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Sir David (NW Hants)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Powell, William (Corby)
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Stanley, Rt Hon Sir John
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D (Bexl'yh'th)
Tredinnick, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wood, Timothy
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Dr. Liam Fox and Mr. Simon Burns.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 35

SUPERVISED ATTENDANCE ORDERS

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 109, in page 27, line 3, after second 'than' insert—

'(i) where the amount of the fine, part or instalment which the offender has failed to pay does not exceed level 1 on the standard scale, 50 hours; and

(ii) in any other case,'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 110, 111, 61 and 112.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The amendments introduce procedural changes to clause 35.

Amendment No. 112 introduces a right to appeal against the imposition and length of a supervised attendance order where such an order has been made as a disposal at first instance in respect of an offender aged 16 or 17.

Amendment No. 61 will make it clear that the Secretary of State can notify courts that schemes are available only for limited classes of cases.

I undertook to consider an amendment that was tabled by the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) in Committee. We have further considered the position. We agree that, where an offender who is already in prison or detained for other matters falls to be dealt with by the court for fine default, the imposition of a supervised attendance order for default may not be the best option. Amendments Nos. 110 and 111 give the court discretion in such circumstances.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 110, in page 27, line 13, at end insert

'and is not serving a sentence of imprisonment'.

No. 111, in page 27, line 31, at end insert—

'( ) In subsection (6), the following definition shall be inserted in the appropriate place in alphabetical order—

"imprisonment" includes detention;".'.

No. 61, in page 27, line 33, at end insert—

'( ) in paragraph 1(1)(a), after the word "persons" there shall be inserted "of a class which includes the offender";'.

No. 112, in page 29, line 3, at end insert—

'( ) For the purposes of any appeal or review, a supervised attendance order made under this section is a sentence.'.— *[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 42

Leave to appeal

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 170, in page 33, line 14, at end insert—

'(1A) In section 228(1) of the 1975 Act there shall be inserted at the end "or any allegation that the conviction was otherwise unsafe.".'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also amendment No. 171, in page 33, line 31, at end insert—

'Provided that, in the case of an allegation under subsection 228(2) above of any miscarriage of justice in the proceedings in which the person was convicted or any miscarriage of justice on the basis of the existence and significance of additional evidence which was not heard at the trial and which was not available and could not reasonably have been made available at the trial, the judge shall grant leave to appeal.'.

Mr. McFall: Amendments Nos. 170 and 171 are concerned with convictions that are considered to be unsafe.

Amendment No. 171 is also concerned with evidence on any issue where it is considered that there was a miscarriage of justice on the basis of the existence and significance of additional evidence that was not heard at the trial and was not available and could not reasonably have been made available at the trial. In that case, the judge, in our submission, shall grant leave to appeal.

We have seen that situation in Scotland over the past six months or so, where there has been an unprecedented split between one division of the Court of Criminal Appeal, chaired by Lord Hope, and the other division, presided over by Lord Ross, the Lord Justice-Clerk. That dispute centred on cases in which someone who had been convicted claimed that since his trial credible and reliable new evidence had emerged which cast serious doubt on his guilt. The legislation allows the Appeal Court to hear additional evidence only if that evidence was not available at the trial and could not reasonably have been made available.

Several months ago, Lord Hope, supported by Lords Allanbridge and Brand, decided to allow an appeal in a case despite the fact that the additional evidence was available at the trial. However, that decision was tested by five other Law Lords, including Lords Ross, McCluskey, Morrison, the late Lord Morton and Lord Cowie. They stated that the law was clear and that the other three judges had gone against their own previous decisions in the way in which they had reinterpreted it.

7 pm

The reason for that reinterpretation by Scotland's most senior judge was that he wished to be flexible regarding appeals and the law. That is not to say that other judges did not wish to be flexible. They felt that Parliament had set down the parameters within which they had to operate. However, I think that Lord Hope was considering the situation regarding the environment in which the law operates and wished to place a liberal interpretation on that. I, and I think many others, would agree with him regarding his intentions in that respect.

There is a real and growing disquiet about the Scottish Appeal Court's ability or willingness to consider possible miscarriages of justice. Lawyers and the public are becoming more and more aware of how difficult it is to have any case re-examined in Scotland. I think that it was with that in mind that Lord Hope decided, in his opinion and in that of the other judges, to interpret the law in a more liberal way.

The situation in Scotland is not different from that in England and Wales. It is a myth that the miscarriages of justice discovered in the past few years in England and Wales are unlikely to happen in Scotland because of what is perceived as a superior legal system. The truth is that, in Scotland, we are less likely to face up to the possibility that they may exist.

At present in Scottish gaols, a number of prisoners are robustly proclaiming their innocence. A number of such cases have been taken up by their Members of Parliament. For example, the case of George Beattie has been taken up by his Member of Parliament, my hon. Friend the Member for Clydesdale (Mr. Hood). In addition, there are the cases of Raymond Gilmour from Paisley and the ice cream war prisoners, Thomas Campbell and Joseph Steel—the latter having gone to extraordinary lengths, gluing himself to the fence at Buckingham palace, to proclaim his innocence, and the former, having been on hunger strike, declared, on his return to prison from hospital, that he might go on hunger strike again. The cases of Peter Hurtt and Alex Hall are two further examples.

[Mr. McFall]

There is a real danger in this situation. Pressure is building up and fuelling the argument for easier referral in cases where there is an alleged miscarriage of justice, notwithstanding the fact that we wish a new body to consider the situation. It is noticeable that the noble Lord Ross, the Lord Justice-Clerk, who ruled against Lord Hope's liberal interpretation of the law, himself in a speech just two years ago, said that there had to be a body to deal with miscarriages of justice in the criminal law system.

The situation is crying out for some change. Even in tonight's debate, we could go some way towards reassuring the legal fraternity and the judges in Scotland about Parliament's intentions. When the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980, and clause 32 in particular, was being debated—now section 228 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975—there was no perception that future generations would be able to bring *Hansard* to their aid. But the decision in the other place in Pepper *v.* Hart—in November 1992, if I remember correctly—has ensured that *Hansard* will be of great assistance. It is precisely with regard to areas of ambiguity where the intentions of Parliament need to be ascertained that the deliberations in Parliament can be used by those outside to interpret the will of Parliament.

The intention of Parliament with regard to appeals is not very clear. My evidence for that is the *Hansard* report of 5 June 1980 of the Standing Committee's proceedings on clause 32 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill. That has now become section 228 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975. Only eight minutes was allowed in Committee to debate the 17 pages of the appeal procedure. Parliament cannot do adequate justice to such a volume of work in eight minutes. We should be concerned that, with the eight minutes that we spent in 1980 and perhaps eight minutes tonight, we shall have spent only a quarter of an hour on the issue of appeals, yet it is one that is tearing the heart out of the Scottish legal system, with the top judges almost at each other's throats.

Given the judgment in Pepper *v.* Hart, Parliament's intentions can be made clear tonight. Tonight's debate could have a crucial and immediate effect on the development of law in Scotland. We owe it to the legal system to give the matter more than the eight minutes given to it in 1980. The Minister could bring clarity to the policy decision for a liberal interpretation which Lord Hope and other judges are seeking to develop.

If we had what was considered to be an unsafe conviction and Lord Hope's liberal interpretation was applied and upheld, the case of Elliott, with which the Minister is familiar, would not have overturned the decision in the case of Church. We could do the legal system in Scotland a favour tonight by our deliberations.

The Government set up the Sutherland committee to consider the issue of miscarriages of justice and to establish a body to consider them. One of the criteria that it considered was whether the Appeal Court should be able to hear additional evidence that was available at the time of the trial provided that there was a reasonable explanation for the failure to adduce the evidence. If I am correct in my interpretation, the dispute between Lord Hope and his fellow judges centres on the interpretation of the word "reasonable".

I favour the view that the Appeal Court should be able to hear additional evidence that was available at the time of the trial, provided that there is a reasonable explanation for the failure to adduce it. The current statutory provisions in respect of additional evidence are contained in section 228 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975, under which a person may bring under review of the High Court any alleged miscarriage of justice in the proceedings in which he was convicted, including any alleged miscarriage of justice, on the basis of the existence and significance of additional evidence that was not heard at the trial and was not available and could not reasonably have been made available at the trial.

Other important statutory provisions in respect of additional evidence are sections 252 and 253 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975. In particular, section 252(c) states:

"Without prejudice to any existing power of the High Court that court may for the purposes of an appeal under section 228(1) . . . (c) take account of any circumstances relevant to the case which were not before the trial judge."

A number of observations could be made about section 228(2), but, for the purposes of this debate, it is appropriate to concentrate on the words in the statute that relate to the non-availability limit on the introduction of fresh evidence. The cases of Church *v.* Her Majesty's Advocate 1995—to which I referred earlier—and Elliott *v.* Her Majesty's Advocate 1995 are relevant. In the Elliott case, the court considered that the provisions of section 228(2) regarding additional evidence constituted a requirement that must be satisfied before the court could hear additional evidence.

Whereas section 228(2) allows a review of any alleged miscarriage of justice when that alleged miscarriage of justice relates to the non-production of additional evidence, the court is constrained by the terms of the statute to hear that evidence only if it was not heard at the trial, was not available and could not reasonably have been made available at the trial.

In earlier debates, the Minister has referred to the Thomson committee. In its first report in August 1971, it expressed the view that additional evidence could be presented on the basis of a reasonable explanation for the failure to adduce the evidence at the trial. The current provision in section 228(2), which derives from the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980, was considered by the court in the Elliott case. The Lord Justice-Clerk considers that, because Parliament did not adopt the reasonable explanation test suggested by the Thomson committee and instead provided the wording currently contained in the statute, it is clear that Parliament intended this more exacting test. The decision in that case reaffirmed the law as it stood prior to the Church case.

Given that in 1980 we debated such a volume of material for only eight minutes, I wonder what Parliament's intention was. I think that many people outside will wonder the same, and it is important for the Minister to comment tonight. Concern has been expressed in a number of quarters that the High Court's interpretation of the additional evidence test does not meet the demands of justice.

The interpretation of the non-availability limit and the introduction of fresh evidence are clearly an issue. In paragraphs 6.29 and 6.30 of his book "Criminal Appeals", Lord McCluskey suggests that non-availability raises a

"simple question of fact: either it was available or it was not but one must also ask: 'available to whom?'"

Lord McCluskey concludes that availability must be considered from the standpoint of the appellant, full account being taken of what was practicable for him at the trial. He also states that the word "reasonable" is

"notoriously elastic and it remains to be seen how severely the High Court will apply this test if the applicant was in fact ignorant of the existence or potential of the additional evidence but could have learned of it by harder work or better detection work he or his advisers might have discovered it".

In all the circumstances, we support the view taken in the Church case, that a reasonable explanation for the failure to produce evidence based on a liberal interpretation of section 228(2) shows the route to reform. It is clear that the policy objective pursued by the Lord Justice-General is, in that case, correct, and that the proper test for dealing with the problem raised in the Church case would be along the lines of an excusable failure to produce the evidence at the original trial. That having been said, I acknowledge that the decision in the Elliott case to the effect that the Church case was wrongly decided is—in terms of the proper construction of the 1975 Act—correct.

I have considered the test proposed, under the Criminal Appeal Bill, that the terms of section 23(2) of the Criminal Appeal Act 1968 should be amended to provide that the evidence should be admissible and capable of belief. I approve of the change, and I think that many members of the Scottish legal fraternity consider that a similar provision should be enacted for Scotland.

Given the Pepper *v.* Hart decision in the House of Lords, I stand by the comments that I made in *The Scotsman* on 25 March 1995. I said then:

"The fact that the law is so rigid means that justice is not being done fairly".

That justice is not being done fairly is recognised not only by those who have recourse to the courts but by those who preside over them. It is incumbent on the Minister to provide a clarity that could assist the Law Lords when they examine cases such as this in the future.

7.15 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I understand that, in the Elliott case, a five-judge bench of the High Court overruled the recent judgment in Church *v.* Her Majesty's Advocate. As the hon. Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) said, the judgment concerned section 228(2) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975.

The Elliott judgment confirmed that a person might bring an appeal on the basis of fresh evidence only if that evidence was not available and could not reasonably have been made available at the trial. The effect of the judgment is that the law has been declared to be as it was thought to be before the Church judgment.

The question on which the hon. Gentleman concentrated—the question whether there is any need to change section 228(2)—is now being considered by the committee on appeals criteria and miscarriages of justice procedures, chaired by Sir Stewart Sutherland. We shall decide whether proposals for legislative action should be presented once that committee has reported.

Amendments Nos. 170 and 171 appear to be founded on a belief that the new leave to appeal arrangements will increase the likelihood that miscarriages of justice will go uncorrected. I cannot accept that proposition. The leave to appeal arrangements contained in clause 42 will filter out—at an early stage—only frivolous and unmeritorious appeals that would otherwise waste the time of the Appeal Court. The new arrangements should therefore allow the court more time in which to consider meritorious appeals when a miscarriage of justice may genuinely have occurred.

Amendment No. 170 deals with the question of appeals criteria in general, and appears to seek to modify the criteria currently applied by the Appeal Court in Scotland. The Scottish Office takes the matter very seriously. We consulted on possible changes to the criteria applied by the Appeal Court in the consultation paper "Sentencing and Appeals", but no clear consensus emerged.

Mr. McFall: What does the Minister consider to be a definition of "reasonable"? That one word is causing a fracture between Lord Hope and other Lords in the Scottish court. Could we not assist the process this evening by providing an opinion—and, one hopes, siding with Lord Hope, the most senior judge in Scotland, who believes that a more liberal interpretation of the law is required?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As I said in my opening remarks, Lord Hope's judgment has been clarified by a five-judge bench of the High Court which overruled the judgment in Church *v.* Her Majesty's Advocate. That decision is the one that will apply.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State decided to set up a representative body—

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for his indulgence in giving way to me again. He says that the position has been clarified, but if he looks at the judgment of those five judges he will note that, according to them, Parliament's intentions were clear. On 5 June 1980, Parliament devoted only eight minutes to the 17 pages involved. Its intentions were far from clear—and clarity from Parliament is cried out for. That is the main issue.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: First, this is a matter on which the courts must interpret the Act as it now stands and they have done that in the five-judge bench of the High Court. As to whether any amendments are necessary, this particular subject is under consideration by the Sutherland committee and we will consider very carefully indeed any representations that they make to us.

Sir Stewart Sutherland is the principal of Edinburgh university, and he is looking at these issues in considerable depth. I am a little surprised that the hon. Member for Dumbarton should seek to pre-empt the committee's work. The amendment has not been drafted in the light of the careful consultation which is necessary and which the committee is bringing to the complex issues involved.

We have already given an undertaking to respond to the Sutherland committee's recommendations as quickly as practicable, and I therefore hope that the hon. Gentleman will not press the amendment.

Mr. McFall: I thank the Minister for those comments, but there are two issues. First, there is the dispute between Lord Hope, Lord Ross and others. Clarity is required on that.

[Mr. McFall]

The second issue is the Sutherland committee. The Minister takes refuge in the fact that the Sutherland committee has been established and will report in the summer of 1996. Meanwhile, the Criminal Appeal Bill is going through the House. There will be a miscarriage of justice body for England and Wales but nothing for Scotland.

The fact that the Sutherland committee reports in 1996 will probably ensure that nothing will be done for Scotland this side of a general election. I and many others in Scotland do not think that the present situation should prevail beyond the next general election. We are looking to the Government to speed things up. It was quite absurd to use the time scale of summer 1996 in the first place. It could have been done much more speedily.

Given that the committee will report in summer 1996, what guarantees can the Minister give that the Government will be up and running immediately to deal with the situation? The miscarriages, and alleged miscarriages, of justice in Scotland at the moment are a running sore. The Government have to attend to that matter. It is no use having recourse to the Sutherland committee when its report date is as far away as 1996. Something more urgent needs to be done now. It is with that in mind that we have tabled the amendments.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I can confirm that the Sutherland committee will report before or by July 1996. The chairman has said that it will report as soon as possible and that those matters will, of course, be dealt with urgently.

The definition of "reasonable" is very much a matter for interpretation by the courts, as it has been over the past century. It is not for us to speculate on what might have been the parliamentary intention earlier, when the particular provision was passed.

Mr. McFall: I thank Minister for that reply. He is really saying that we do not know what Parliament had in mind in 1980, but it is certainly none of our business in 1995 to decide what Parliament had in mind in 1980. Frankly, that is a most inadequate answer, and something needs to be done.

That one word "reasonable" is causing the problem. Something needs to be done about it. If the Sutherland committee reports by July 1996, will the Minister give a commitment that the recommendations will be implemented as soon as possible thereafter, by October 1996, in the new parliamentary Session?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: We will act as soon as possible. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the Secretary of State takes these matters very seriously, as he does all issues involving justice where it is alleged that the person convicted has not committed the crime and fresh evidence has allegedly been made available.

Amendment negatived.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 34, line 24, at end insert—

'(6A) Comments in writing made under subsection (1)(a) or (5)(a) above may, without prejudice to the generality of that provision, specify the arguable grounds of appeal (whether or not they are contained in the note of appeal) on the basis of which leave to appeal is granted.

(6B) Where the arguable grounds of appeal are specified by virtue of subsection (6A) above it shall not, except by leave of the High Court on cause shown, be competent for the appellant to found any aspect of his appeal on any ground of appeal contained in the note of appeal but not so specified.

(6C) Any application by the appellant for the leave of the High Court under subsection (6B) above—

(a) shall be made not less than seven days before the date fixed for the hearing of the appeal; and

(b) shall, not less than seven days before that date, be intimated by the appellant to the Crown Agent.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 2, 62, 4 and 63.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Clause 42 introduces a new requirement for leave to appeal. When these provisions were debated in another place, it was noted that where leave to appeal was granted, the appellant would be allowed to advance all grounds of appeal contained in the note of appeal even if the single judge had considered certain grounds to be frivolous and unarguable.

The amendments also ensure that where the single judge or the High Court identifies the arguable grounds for appeal not contained in the note of appeal it shall be competent for the appellant to found aspects of the appeal on those grounds of appeal without requiring further leave from the High Court. This matter was also debated in another place. I am pleased to be able to clarify the arrangements.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 2, in page 34, line 29, at end insert—

'( ) After subsection (3) of section 233 of that Act (restriction on arguing ground not in note of appeal) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) Subsection (3) above shall not apply as respects any ground of appeal specified as an arguable ground of appeal by virtue of subsection (6A) of section 230A of this Act."'.

No. 62, in page 35, line 36, at end insert—

'(6A) Comments in writing made under subsection (1)(a) or (5)(a) above may, without prejudice to the generality of that provision, specify the arguable grounds of appeal (whether or not they are contained in the stated case) on the basis of which leave to appeal is granted.

(6B) Where the arguable grounds of appeal are specified by virtue of subsection (6A) above it shall not, except by leave of the High Court on cause shown, be competent for the appellant to found any aspect of his appeal on any ground of appeal contained in the stated case but not so specified.

(6C) Any application by the appellant for the leave of the High Court under subsection (6B) above—

(a) shall be made not less than seven days before the date fixed for the hearing of the appeal; and

(b) shall, not less than seven days before that date, be intimated by the appellant to the Crown Agent.'.

No. 4, in page 35, line 41, at end insert—

'( ) After subsection (3) of section 452 of that Act (restriction on arguing ground not in stated case) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) Subsection (3) above shall not apply as respects any ground of appeal specified as an arguable ground of appeal by virtue of subsection (6A) of section 442ZA of this Act."'.

No. 63, in page 36, line 35, at end insert—

'(5A) Comments in writing made under subsection (1)(a) or (4)(a) above may, without prejudice to the generality of that provision, specify the arguable grounds of appeal (whether or not they are contained in the note of appeal) on the basis of which leave to appeal is granted.

(5B) Where the arguable grounds of appeal are specified by virtue of subsection (5A) above it shall not, except by leave of the High Court on cause shown, be competent for the appellant to found any aspect of his appeal on any ground of appeal contained in the note of appeal but not so specified.

(5C) Any application by the appellant for the leave of the High Court under subsection (5B) above—

(a) shall be made not less than seven days before the date fixed for the hearing of the appeal; and

(b) shall, not less than seven days before that date, be intimated by the appellant to the Crown Agent.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 46

NEW PROSECUTION FOR SAME OR SIMILAR OFFENCE

Amendments made: No. 113, in page 38, line 19, leave out 'and'.

No. 114, in page 38, line 32, at end insert '; and

(c) after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsections—

"(5) On granting authority under section 254(1)(c) of this Act to bring a new prosecution, the High Court shall, after giving the parties an opportunity of being heard, order the detention of the accused person in custody or admit him to bail.

(6) Subsections (2)(b) and (4) to (6) of section 101 of this Act (prevention of delay in trials) shall apply to an accused person who is detained under subsection (5) above as they apply to an accused person detained by virtue of being committed until liberated in due course of law.".'.

No. 115, in page 38, line 36, leave out 'and'.

No. 116, in page 39, line 2, at end insert '; and

(c) after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(5) On granting authority under section 452A(1)(d) of this Act to bring a new prosecution, the High Court may, after giving the parties an opportunity of being heard, order the detention of the accused person in custody; but an accused person may not be detained by virtue of this subsection for a period of more than 40 days.".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 49

EXAMINATION OF FACTS

Amendments made: No. 6, in page 41, line 34, leave out 'made under subsection (8) below'.

No. 7, in page 42,, leave out lines 1 to 3..

No. 8, in page 43, line 22, leave out 'made under subsection (8) below'.

No. 9, in page 43,, leave out lines 38 to 40.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 51

APPEAL BY ACCUSED IN CASE INVOLVING INSANITY

Amendments made: No. 10, in page 46, line 23, at end insert 'and'.

No. 11, in page 46, line 46, leave out from 'allow' to end of line 48.

No. 12, in page 47, line 33, at end insert 'and'.

No. 13, in page 48, line 7, leave out from 'allow' to end of line 9.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 52

APPEAL BY PROSECUTOR IN CASE INVOLVING INSANITY

Amendments made: No. 14, in page 49, line 1, at end insert 'and'.

No. 15, in page 49, line 13, leave out from 'allow' to end of line 15.

No. 16, in page 50, line 1, at end insert 'and'.

No. 17, in page 50, line 13, leave out from 'allow' to end of line 15.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 55

COMMITTAL TO HOSPITAL FOR INQUIRY INTO MENTAL CONDITION

Amendment made: No. 64, in page 51, line 31, leave out 'health' and insert 'condition'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 60

JURISDICTION OF DISTRICT COURT IN RELATION TO STATUTORY OFFENCES

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 65, in page 56, line 43, leave out from 'offence' to 'a' in line 46 and insert—

'(a) to impose a sentence of imprisonment for a period exceeding 60 days;

(b) to impose'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 66 and 88.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The first two of these amendments make it clear that the amount of caution that the district courts may fix in respect of a statutory offence is the same as that applicable to common law offences by virtue of section 284 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975.

The second amendment puts beyond doubt that a court in solemn proceedings may order an offender, on conviction, to find caution for good behaviour.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 66, in page 56, line 47, at end insert '; or

(c) to ordain an accused person to find caution for any period exceeding six months or to an amount exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 65

LEGAL AID IN CRIMINAL APPEALS

Amendments made: No. 67, in page 58, line 18, leave out 'as follows' and insert 'in accordance with subsections (2) to (5) below'.

No. 68, in page 59, line 19, at end insert—

'(6) In section 30(3) of that Act (application of section 25 of that Act to legal aid in contempt proceedings)—

(a) before the words "Section 25" there shall be inserted "Subsections (2)(a) and (c), (2A) to (4) and (6) of";

(b) for the words "it applies" there shall be substituted "they apply";

(c) after the word "sentence" there shall be inserted ", other disposal";

(d) after the word "application" there shall be inserted the following paragraph—

"(za) in subsection (2A) of that section, the reference to the High Court shall include a reference to the Court of Session;"; and

(e) in paragraph (b), for the word "(5)" there shall be substituted "(6)".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 70

GENERAL PROVISION

Amendment made: No. 146, in page 61, line 22, leave out

'in respect of which it is made'

and insert—

'(i) from the commission of the offence; or

(ii) where section 71(3A) of this Act applies, from the commission of the offence and any other offence to which this Chapter applies'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 71

BENEFIT FROM COMMISSION OF OFFENCE

Amendments made: No. 147, in page 61, line 36, at beginning insert

'Subject to subsection (3A) below,'.

No. 148, in page 61, line 37, leave out 'of the benefit' and insert

'referred to in section 70(5)(a)(i) of this Act'.

No. 149, in page 62, line 3, leave out from 'period' to end of line 6 and insert—

'(3A) Where—

(a) the application for the confiscation order has been made in respect of two or more offences; or

(b) during the relevant period the accused has been convicted of at least one other offence to which this Chapter applies, being an offence committed after the coming into force of this Chapter,

the court may, in determining the amount referred to in section 70(5)(a)(ii) of this Act, make the assumptions set out in subsection (3B) below, except in so far as the accused proves either of those assumptions, on the balance of probabilities, to be incorrect.

(3B) Those assumptions are—

(a) that any property or economic advantage which has been obtained by the accused during the relevant period has been obtained in connection with the commission of an offence to which this Chapter applies; and

(b) that any expenditure by him during the relevant period was met out of property or other economic advantage obtained in connection with the commission of such an offence.

(3C) In subsections (3A) and (3B) above, "the relevant period" means the period of six years ending with the date on which proceedings were instituted against the accused for the offence in respect of which the application for the confiscation order has been made.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 73

GIFTS

Amendments made: No. 150, in page 63, line 6, after 'if' insert '—(a)'.

No. 151, in page 63, line 10, at end insert '; or

(b) where subsection (3A) of section 71 of this Act applies, it was made by the accused within the relevant period within the meaning of subsection (3C) of that section.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 74

MAKING OF CONFISCATION ORDERS

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I beg to move amendment No. 152, in page 64, leave out lines 32 and 33.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss also Government amendments Nos. 153, 155 and 160 to 162.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The provisions that these amendments would adjust prevent the court from making a suspended forfeiture order or other forfeiture order until it has determined the amount payable. We do not consider that the court should be so fettered because that could take months. The court should be able to forfeit property immediately after conviction where this is considered appropriate.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 153, in page 64, leave out lines 39 and 40.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 75

STATEMENTS RELEVANT TO MAKING CONFISCATION ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 154, in page 65, line 14, leave out

'from the commission of the offence'

and insert

'for the purposes of section 70(5)(a) of this Act'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 76

POSTPONED CONFISCATION ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 155, in page 66, line 20, leave out from 'him;' to end of line 22.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 77

INCREASE IN BENEFIT OR REALISABLE PROPERTY

Amendments made: No. 156, in page 67, line 23, leave out

'obtained in connection with the commission of the offence'

and insert

'for the purposes of section 70(5)(a) of this Act'.

No. 157, in page 67, line 34, leave out

'in connection with the commission of the offence'.

No. 158, in page 68, line 16, after '71(2)' insert 'and (3B)'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 79

CONFISCATION ORDERS WHERE PROCEEDS OF CRIME DISCOVERED AT LATER DATE

Amendments made: No. 117, in page 69, line 22, leave out 'Section 74' and insert

'Sections 70(3) and 74(1), (2) and (4)'.

No. 159, in page 69, line 35, after '71(2)' insert 'and (3B)'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

7.30 pm

Clause 80

APPLICATION OF PROVISIONS RELATING TO FINES TO ENFORCEMENT OF CONFISCATION ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 18, in page 70, line 44, at end insert—

'( ) Where a court, by virtue of subsection (1) above, orders the sum due under a confiscation order to be recovered by civil diligence under section 411 of the 1975 Act, any arrestment executed by a prosecutor under subsection (2) of section 96 of this Act shall be deemed to have been executed by the court as if that subsection authorised such execution.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 82

EXERCISE OF POWERS BY COURT OR ADMINISTRATOR

Amendment made: No. 118, in page 71, line 23, leave out from 'of' to end of line 25 and insert

'and paragraphs 1, 4 and 12 of Schedule 3 to this Act in relation to confiscation orders and on an administrator by that Schedule.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 83

COMPENSATION

Amendment made: No. 119, in page 72, line 26, leave out '92' and insert '91, 92, 94'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Clause 101

ARRESTMENT OF SCOTTISH PROPERTY AFFECTED BY ORDER REGISTERED UNDER SECTION 98

Amendments made: No. 69, in page 88, line 11, leave out 'prosecutor, the court' and insert

'Lord Advocate, the Court of Session'.

No. 70, in page 88, line 17, leave out 'prosecutor' and insert 'Lord Advocate'.

No. 71, in page 88, line 27, leave out

'prosecutor shall apply to the court'

and insert

'Lord Advocate shall apply to the Court of Session'.

No. 72, in page 88, leave out lines 36 to 40.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 4

SEQUESTRATION ETC. OF PERSONS HOLDING REALISABLE OR FORFEITABLE PROPERTY

Amendments made: No. 120, in page 111, line 6, leave out '94' and insert '96'.

No. 121, in page 112, line 11, leave out '94' and insert '96'.

No. 122, in page 113, line 17, leave out '94' and insert '96'.

No. 19, in page 113, line 34, leave out

'section 1 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986'

and insert

'section 2 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994'.

No. 123, in page 114, line 29, leave out '94' and insert '96 and 98 to 101'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 5

AMENDMENTS TO THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE (SCOTLAND) ACT 1987 RELATING TO PART II

Amendments made: No. 124, in page 116, line 30, leave out 'a probation order or'.

No. 160, in page 116, leave out lines 36 to 38.

No. 161, in page 116, leave out lines 44 to 46.

No. 162, in page 117, line 25, leave out from 'him' to end of line 27.

No. 125, in page 118, line 33, after '(6)' insert

'Without prejudice to section 2(1) of this Act,'.

No. 126, in page 118, line 35, leave out from 'the' to the end of line 47 and insert—

'accused, or

(b) the basis of the non-acceptance by the accused of any such allegation is challenged by the prosecutor,

the court shall consider the matters being challenged at a hearing.

(7) Where the judge presiding at a hearing held under subsection (6) above is not the trial judge he may, on the application of either party, if he considers that it would be in the interests of justice to do so, adjourn the hearing to a date when the trial judge is available.".'.

No. 127, in page 122, line 30, leave out '6A' and insert '2'.

No. 20, in page 123, line 49, at end insert—

'(c) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2A) Where a court, by virtue of subsection (1) above, orders the sum due under a confiscation order to be recovered by civil diligence under section 411 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975, any arrestment executed by a prosecutor under subsection (2) of section 11A of this Act shall be deemed to have been executed by the court as if that subsection authorised such execution.".'.

No. 128, in page 124, line 11, after 'person's' insert 'interest in his'.

No. 129, in page 126, line 42, leave out 'paragraph (b) and'.

No. 130, in page 126, line 43, at end insert—

'( ) in subsection (2), for the words "(1)(a)" there shall be substituted "(1)";'.

No. 131, in page 127, line 21, after 'effect;' insert—

'( ) for subsection (2) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(2) Subsections (2)(a) and (7)(a) of Section 8 of this Act shall apply in relation to an interdict under subsection (1) above as they apply in relation to a restraint order; and subsections (1), (2), (4) and (5) of section 9 thereof shall apply in relation to subsection (1) above as they apply in relation to subsection (1) of the said section 9.".'.

No. 21, in page 128, line 14, at end insert—

'. In section 19 (effect of appointment under section 13 of that Act on diligence) for the words "section 11" there shall be substituted "sections 11 and 11A".'.

No. 22, in page 128, line 24, after '11' insert ',11A'.

No. 132, in page 128, line 25, leave out from 'words' to first 'of' in line 26 and insert

'from ", so far as" to the end there shall be substituted "be exercised with a view to realising no more than the value".'.

No. 73, in page 128, line 31, leave out from 'words' to the end of line 32 and insert

'from "and" to "11(6)" there shall be substituted "28, 28A and 28B".'.

No. 133, in page 129, line 17, leave out '(except subsection (8) thereof)'.

No. 23, in page 129, leave out line 45 and insert—

'(ii) for the word "11" there shall be substituted "9, 11, 11A".'.

No. 134, in page 130, line 5, leave out

'a gift caught by Part I of this Act'

and insert

'an implicative gift'.

No. 24, in page 130, line 46, leave out

'section 8, 11 or 12 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986'

and insert

'section 26, 29 or 30 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994'.

No. 25, in page 131, line 9, leave out

'section 13 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986'

and insert

'section 31 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994'.

No. 74, in page 131, line 11, leave out 'prosecutor, the court' and insert

'Lord Advocate, the Court of Session'.

No. 75, in page 131, line 19, leave out 'prosecutor' and insert 'Lord Advocate'.

No. 26, in page 131, line 24, leave out

'section 8, 11 or 12 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986'

and insert

'section 26, 29 or 30 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994'.

No. 76, in page 131, line 30, leave out

'prosecutor shall apply to the court'

and insert

'Lord Advocate shall apply to the Court of Session'.

No. 27, in page 131, line 38, leave out

'section 13 of the Drug Trafficking Offences Act 1986'

and insert

'section 31 of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994'.

No. 77, in page 131, leave out lines 40 to 46.

No. 135, in page 132, line 1, leave out from first 'section' to ', for' in line 2 and insert

'32 (Orders in Council as regards taking action in designated country)—

(a) in subsection (2)'.

No. 136, in page 132, line 3, at end insert '; and

(b) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3) An Order in Council under this section may amend or apply, with or without modifications, any enactment.".'.

No. 78, in page 132, line 19, leave out 'and 28A' and insert ', 28A and 28B'.

No. 79, in page 132, line 36, leave out 'and 28A' and insert ', 28A and 28B'.

No. 80, in page 132, line 51, leave out 'and 28A' and insert ', 28A and 28B'.

No. 81, in page 133, line 32, leave out 'and 28A' and insert ', 28A and 28B'.

No. 30, in page 133, line 45, at end insert—

'. In section 44(1) (offences relating to controlled drugs: fines), for the words "the proviso to subsection (1)" there shall be substituted "subsection (3)(a)".'.

No. 137, in page 133, line 45, at end insert—

'. In section 41(2) (*disclosure of information held by government departments*)—

(a) in paragraph (a), for the words "paragraph (a) thereof" there shall be substituted "subsection (3) of that section";

(b) in paragraph (b), for the words "paragraph (b) of subsection (1)" there shall be substituted "subsection (4)"; and

(c) the words from the end of paragraph (b) to the end of the subsection shall cease to have effect.'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 6

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 82, in page 134, line 19, leave out

'Schedules A (forms of indictment),'

and insert

'Section 3 of and Schedules'.

No. 31, in page 134, line 27, leave out from beginning to '3' and insert

'Parts I and III to VI of Schedule 2 (forms of procedure) and Schedule'.

No. 32, in page 134, line 28, at end insert—

'The Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965 (c.45)

. In section 8(1)(b) of the Backing of Warrants (Republic of Ireland) Act 1965 (rules of court), for the words "457(a)" there shall be substituted "457ZA".'.

No. 33, in page 135, line 1, leave out paragraph 7.

No. 83, in page 135, line 14, at end insert—

'. In section 19(1)(a) (intimation to a solicitor), for the words from "of" to the end there shall be substituted—

"(i) of the place where the person is being detained;

(ii) whether the person is to be liberated; and

(iii) if the person is not to be liberated, the date on which he is to be taken to court and the court to which he is to be taken;".'.

No. 84, in page 135, line 23, at end insert—

'. In each of sections 23 and 329 (remand and committal of persons under 21)—

(a) in paragraph (a) of subsection (1), for the words from "commit" to the end there shall be substituted ", instead of committing him to prison, commit him to the local authority in whose area the court is situated to be detained—

(i) where the court so requires, in secure accommodation within the meaning of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968; and

(ii) in any other case, in a suitable place of safety chosen by the authority;"; and

(b) in subsection (4), for the words from "and" in the second place where it occurs to the end there shall be substituted "to be detained—

(a) where the court so requires, in secure accommodation within the meaning of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968; and

(b) in any other case, in a suitable place of safety chosen by the authority.".'.

No. 85, in page 135, line 29, at end insert—

'. In section 31 (appeal in respect of bail), after subsection (4) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(4A) Where an applicant in an appeal under this section is under 21 years of age, section 23 of this Act shall apply to the High Court or, as the case may be, the Lord Commissioner of Justiciary when disposing of the appeal as it applies to a court when remanding or committing a person of the applicant's age for trial or sentence.".'.

No. 34, in page 135, line 35, leave out paragraph 15.

No. 86, in page 136, line 23, at end insert—

'. After section 48 there shall be inserted the following sections—

"Common law and statutory offences in same indictment

48A. It shall be competent to include in one indictment both common law and statutory charges.

Description of offence in words of statute or order

48B. In an indictment the description of any offence in the words of the statute or order contravened, or in similar words, shall be sufficient.".'.

No. 87, in page 136, line 38, at end insert—

'. After section 60 there shall be inserted the following section—

"Proceedings under the Merchant Shipping Acts

60A. In any proceedings under the Merchant Shipping Acts it shall not be necessary to produce the official register of the ship referred to in the proceedings in order to prove the nationality of the ship, but the nationality of the ship as stated in the indictment shall, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, be presumed.".'.

No. 138, in page 137, line 12, at end insert—

'. In section 72 (citation of jurors and witnesses)—

(a) the existing provision shall become subsection (1);

(b) in that subsection, after the word "shall" in the second place where it occurs there shall be inserted ", subject to subsection (2) below,"; and

(c) after that subsection there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(2) A court shall not issue a warrant to apprehend a witness who fails to appear at a diet to which he has been duly cited unless the court is satisfied that the witness received the citation or that its contents came to his knowledge.".'.

No. 88, in page 142, line 7, at end insert—

'. After section 182 there shall be inserted the following—

"Caution

182A. Where a person is convicted of an offence (other than an offence the sentence for which is fixed by law) the court may, instead of or in addition to imposing a fine or a period of imprisonment, ordain the accused to find caution for good behaviour for a period not exceeding 12 months and to such amount as the court considers appropriate.".'.

No. 89, in page 142, line 27, at end insert—

'. In each of sections 196(1) and 402 (fines, etc., may be enforced in another district), the proviso shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 90, in page 144, line 12, after 'etc.)' insert—

'(a) in each of subsections (1) and (2), after the words "section 228(1)(b)" there shall be inserted ", (bb), (bc) or (board)"; and

(b)'.

No. 91, in page 144, line 18, at end insert

', (bb), (bc) or (board)'.

No. 92, in page 144, line 38, at end insert—

'. In section 269 (extract convictions), after the words "section 228(1)(b)" there shall be inserted ", (bb), (bc), or (board)".'.

No. 35, in page 145, line 5, at end insert—

'. In section 277(2) (non-compliance with certain provisions may be waived), the words "section 236C", "section 237", "section 246", "section 259", "section 272" and "section 273" shall cease to have effect.

. Section 282 (power to make Acts of Adjournal: solemn procedure) shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 163, in page 145, line 20, at end insert—

'. Section 289D(1A)(d) (power to alter sums specified in section 435(e) of that Act) shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 164, in page 145, leave out lines 24 and 25 and insert—

'. In section 300 (appeal in respect of bail)—

(a) after subsection (3) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3A) Where an applicant in an appeal under this section is under 21 years of age, section 329 of this Act shall apply to the High Court or, as the case may be, the Lord Commissioner of Justiciary when disposing of the appeal as it applies to a court when remanding or committing a person of the applicant's age for trial or sentence."; and

(b) in subsection (4)—

(i) the words from ", or where" to "96 hours" shall cease to have effect; and

(ii) for the word "periods" there shall be substituted "period".'.

No. 94, in page 145, line 25, at end insert—

'. For section 305 (intimation to a solicitor) there shall be substituted the following section—

"Right of accused to have access to solicitor

305.—(1) Where any person has been arrested on any criminal charge, such person shall be entitled immediately upon such arrest—

(a) to have intimation sent to a solicitor that his professional assistance is required by such a person and informing him—

(i) of the place where the person is being detained;

(ii) whether the person is to be liberated; and

(iii) if the person is not to be liberated, the date on which he is to be taken to court and the court to which he is to be taken;

(b) to be told what rights there are under paragraph (a) above and subsections (2) and (3) below.

(2) Such solicitor shall be entitled to have a private interview with the person accused before he is examined on declaration, and to be present at such examination.

(3) It shall be in the power of the sheriff or justice to delay such examination for a period not exceeding 48 hours from and after the time of such person's arrest, in order to allow time for the attendance of such solicitor.".'.

No. 95, in page 145, line 29, after 'applications)' insert '(a)'.

No. 96, in page 145, line 30, at end insert '; and

(b) after the word "open" there shall be inserted "shut and".'.

No. 38, in page 145, line 32, leave out from '(1),' to '; and' in line 36 and insert

'the words from "in" where it first occurs to the end shall cease to have effect'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Mr. McFall: I beg to move amendment No. 172, in page 145, line 37, leave out 'subsections (4) and (5)' and insert 'subsection (4)'.

The amendment would again ensure the provision of useful information that is to be withdrawn. If the information is withdrawn, the defence cannot advise adequately regarding a plea to be made or a prospective penalty to be imposed. Paragraph 97 of schedule 6 provides, among other things, that section 311 (4) and (5) of the Summary Jurisdiction (Scotland) Act 1954 shall cease to have effect.

There is concern about section 311(5) which provides that, where a complaint includes a statutory charge, a notice under the Act has to be served on the accused with a complaint and notice of prior convictions after the charge has been proved and laid before the judge by the prosecutor and entered into the record of the proceedings. That means that the accused will frequently not know of what he has been found guilty. When the accused is telling his lawyer his circumstances, it is extremely useful

[Mr. McFall]

to have such notice, and withdrawing it would be detrimental. With that in mind, I seek the Government's views.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The proposal to repeal the requirement to provide notices of penalties in summary cases follows a recommendation of the Standing Committee on Criminal Procedure, chaired by Lord MacLean.

The value of the notices does not justify the considerable resources devoted to preparing and serving them. They are not served in solemn procedure or for common law offences and, as they state only the maximum penalty available, they provide limited guidance to the accused as to the penalty which is likely to be imposed on him.

The requirement to serve a notice of penalty can, in certain cases, lead to the court not being able to sentence the offender if the notice, for some reason, contains an error or has not been properly served. In our view, it is not appropriate that the proper functioning of the court should be disrupted because a minor technical procedure has gone awry.

I understand that incidental use has been made of the notices by sheriffs and justices of the peace as guidance on the maximum penalties available to them in sentencing. We recognise that sentencers need to be fully informed of the penalties available to them. The Scottish Courts Service and the Crown Office are therefore in the process of setting up arrangements for providing the bench with the required information. The Crown Office has agreed to prepare and maintain a manual of statutory offences which will be made available in all courts, including the district courts. It should provide the courts with much more comprehensive and, indeed, appropriate information than a notice of penalties.

With that assurance, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will feel able to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. McFall: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendments made: No. 39, in page 145, leave out lines 39 and 40.

No. 139, in page 146, line 27, at end insert—

'. In section 320 (apprehension of witness), after the word "may" where it first occurs there shall be inserted ", if it is satisfied that he received the citation or that its contents came to his knowledge,".'.

No. 97, in page 147, line 12, at end insert—

'. Section 345 (administration of oath to same witness in case at same diet) shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 140, in page 148, line 42, at end insert—

'. In section 408 (discharge from imprisonment to be specified), for the words "for payment of a fine or for finding of" there shall be substituted "in default of payment of a fine or on failure to find".'.

No. 40, in page 149, leave out lines 18 to 20 and insert—

'. Section 435 (expenses) shall cease to have effect.'.

No. 41, in page 151, line 14, at end insert—

'. Section 457 (power to make Acts of Adjournal: summary procedure) shall cease to have effect.

. Before section 457A there shall be inserted the following section—

"Acts of Adjournal

457ZA.—(1) The High Court may by Act of Adjournal—

(a) regulate the practice and procedure in relation to criminal procedure; and

(b) make such rules and regulations as may be necessary or expedient to carry out the purposes and accomplish the objects of any enactment (including an enactment in this Act) in so far as it relates to criminal procedure,

provided that no rule, regulation or provision which affects the governor or any other officer of a prison shall be made by any such Act of Adjournal except with the consent of the Secretary of State.

(2) The High Court may by Act of Adjournal modify, amend or repeal any enactment (including an enactment in this Act) in so far as that enactment relates to matters with respect to which an Act of Adjournal may be made under subsection (1) above.".'.

No. 42, in page 151, leave out lines 29 and 30.

No. 99, in page 151, line 39, at end insert—

'(3) In subsection (6), for the words "Great Britain" there shall be substituted "the United Kingdom".'.

No. 100, in page 151, line 46, at end insert—

'The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 1976 (c. 67)

. In section 4 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 1976 (unlawful sexual intercourse with girl between 13 and 16)—

(a) in the proviso to subsection (1), the words "on indictment" shall cease to have effect; and

(b) after subsection (2) there shall be inserted the following subsection—

"(3) For the purposes of the proviso to subsection (1) above, a prosecution shall be deemed to commence on the date on which a warrant to apprehend or to cite the accused is granted, if such warrant is executed without undue delay.".'.

No. 101, in page 152, line 18, leave out from beginning to '(service' in line 20 and insert

'In section 26(4) of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980'.

No. 141, in page 154, line 32, at end insert—

'( ) In section 11(3)(b) (duration of licence), for the words from "the" in the second place where it occurs to the end there shall be substituted—

"there has elapsed—

(i) a period (reckoned from the date on which he was ordered to be returned to prison under or by virtue of subsection (2)(a) of that section) equal in length to the period between the date on which the new offence was committed and the date on which he would (but for his release) have served the original sentence in full; or

(ii) subject to subsection (4) below, a total period equal in length to the period for which he was so ordered to be returned to prison together with, so far as not concurrent with that period, any term of imprisonment to which he was sentenced in respect of the new offence,

whichever results in the later date.

(4) In subsection (3)(b) above, "the original sentence" and "the new offence" have the same meanings as in section 16 of this Act.".

( ) For section 16(7) (application of early release provisions where further offence committed by released prisoner) there shall be substituted the following subsection—

"(7) Where an order under subsection (2) or (4) above is made in respect of a person released on licence—

(a) the making of the order shall have the effect of revoking the licence; and

(b) if the sentence comprising—

(i) the period for which the person is ordered to be returned to prison; and

(ii) so far as not concurrent with that period, any term of imprisonment to which he is sentenced in respect of the new offence,

is six months or more but less than four years, section 1(1) of this Act shall apply in respect of that sentence as if for the word "unconditionally" there were substituted the words "on licence".".'.

No. 142, in page 155, line 2, at end insert—

'(6) In Schedule 3 (documentary evidence in criminal proceedings), in paragraph 6(4), for the words "after the close of that party's evidence and" there shall be substituted "at any time".'.

No. 43, in page 155, line 45, leave out from 'by' to 'or' in line 1 on page 156 and insert

'section 2(9) of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994" there shall be substituted the words "by section 2(9) of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994'.

No. 44, in page 156, line 4, leave out from 'by' to 'or' in line 5 and insert

'section 2(9) of the said Act of 1994" there shall be substituted the words "by section 2(9) of the Drug Trafficking Act 1994'.

No. 143, in page 158, line 11, at end insert—

'(8) This section extends to Scotland only.'.

No. 102, in page 158, line 40, at end insert—

'(4) In paragraph 19 (enforcement in Scotland of orders made elsewhere in the British Isles)—

(a) in sub-paragraph (5), for the words "and 16" there shall be substituted ", 16 and (subject to sub-paragraph (5A) below) 16A"; and

(b) after sub-paragraph (5) there shall be inserted the following sub-paragraph—

"(5A) In its application by virtue of sub-paragraph (5) above paragraph 16A above shall have effect with the following modifications—

(a) for the references to the prosecutor there shall be substituted references to the Lord Advocate; and

(b) for the references to the court there shall be substituted references to the Court of Session.".'.—*[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]*

Schedule 7

Amendments made: No. 103, in page 159, line 30, column 3, leave out 'Schedule A' and insert 'Section 3'.

No. 45, in page 159, line 37, column 3, leave out 'Schedule 2' and insert

'In Schedule 2, Parts I and III to VI'.

No. 104, in page 161, line 43, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 196(1), the proviso.'.

No. 46, in page 162, line 34, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 277, in subsection (2), the words "section 236C", "section 237", "section 246", "section 259", "section 272" and "section 273". Section 282.'.

No. 165, in page 162, line 34, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 289D(1A)(d).'.

No. 47, in page 162, line 53, column 3, leave out 'Section 311' and insert

'In section 311, in subsection (1), the words from "in" where it first occurs to the end; and subsections'.

No. 105, in page 163, line 37, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 345.'.

No. 106, in page 164, line 35, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 402, the proviso.'.

No. 48, in page 164, line 48, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 435.'.

No. 49, in page 165, line 7, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 457.'.

No. 50, in page 165, line 9, column 3, leave out from '(1),' to 'in' in line 14.

No. 107, in page 165, line 20, at end insert—

1976 c.67.	*The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 1976.*	*'In section 4(1), in the proviso, the words "on indictment".'.*

No. 108, in page 165, line 21, leave out 'section 9(3)'.

No. 144, in page 166, line 35, column 3, leave out 'paragraph (b) and,'.

No. 145, in page 167, line 22, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 41(2), the words from the end of paragraph (b) to the end of the subsection.'.

—[Lord James Douglas-Hamilton.]

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—[*Mr. Wood.*]

7.37 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Bill was brought to the House from another place in February and has since been subjected to intense scrutiny by members of all parties, in Committee and now on Report. We have been able to respond to some of the points that were made.

The Bill will equip the criminal justice system in Scotland to meet the challenges that it faces as we move into the 21st century. It will tighten the operation of bail, ensure the effective use of DNA detection techniques, improve the selection of jurors, streamline appeals procedures and reduce the burden on the Appeal Court. It will significantly reduce needless attendance at court by witnesses and victims of crime, provide fairer treatment for those unfit to face trial because of insanity, extend the scope for the use of fines in appropriate cases, provide a serious alternative to imprisonment for fine default and extend the powers of the courts to confiscate the proceeds of crime.

Those measures will improve the delivery of justice in Scotland. The improvements will be felt throughout the criminal justice system for many years to come. The Bill is wholeheartedly in Scotland's interests, and I commend it to the House.

7.38 pm

Mr. Ian Davidson (Glasgow, Govan): I should be willing to speak to many issues were time available, but I want especially to raise the issue of those who offend while on bail. The issue arose repeatedly in Committee, and I must admit that I am not convinced that the

[Mr. Ian Davidson]

Government are taking it sufficiently seriously. I do not think that they realise how, in many working class communities in particular, the credibility of the system is being undermined by what people regard as a revolving door situation.

Very often, young people committing violent assaults are released back into the community almost as soon as they have entered the police station. In some cases, they are perhaps taken to court but are then released on bail without any penalty being imposed on them. That effectively acts as a deterrent to witnesses who might otherwise come forward and it makes people much less likely to report offences to the police, because there is a widely held view that nothing happens as a result of complaints being made. That is enormously dispiriting for police officers who make the time and take the effort to catch youngsters who have perpetrated—in many cases—quite horrific offences against ordinary law-abiding members of the community. I have already raised a couple of incidents in correspondence with the Minister, but it is worth bringing him up to date with the situation in my area.

A gang is active in Govan that has approximately 18 members. Collectively, over an 18-month period, they have been arrested no fewer than 259 times. The vast majority of the gang have not, at the time of speaking, been sentenced by the courts: no penalty has been imposed on them. In those circumstances, it is understandable that there is a widespread view that those youngsters are utterly untouchable.

I wish to make particular reference to one case that has horrified me and many people in the community, about which the Minister has not so far been able to respond. On 11 March, a youngster struck one of my constituents on the hand and head with a machete. My constituent was left with a scalp wound, his hand was badly damaged and there was a danger that his arm would be lost altogether. He had to be taken to hospital for a blood transfusion. The 15-year-old youngster who had committed the offence was caught, taken to court and immediately released back into the community. He was not held for any length of time whatever.

One week later, the same youngster attacked somebody else with a knife, inflicted severe injury and endangered the person's life. Again, knives and weapons were used. That time, the youngster was held for nine days and then released: a youngster charged with two attempted murders was held in custody for nine days before being released. Eventually, on 27 April, that same youngster was involved in another stabbing incident. There is something obviously amiss when a youngster who is clearly violent and prone to attacks with dangerous weapons is released back into the community without any restraint whatever.

I want to draw another point to the Minister's attention. I appreciate that he is busy with other matters, but I would welcome his attention so that he can respond when he replies to the debate.

The Govan fair took place recently. On the Friday evening of the fair, there were battles between two gangs in the Govan area, during which eight people were arrested. The next night, there were further battles, during which six people were arrested. Among those who were arrested were five youngsters who between them had a total of 104 charges pending.

When youngsters who have 104 charges pending—many of them were offences under the Bail etc. (Scotland) Act 1980—are released and running about in central Govan with knives machetes and axes, clearly the criminal justice system is not operating correctly. One of those youngsters—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member, but I must remind him that the purpose of Third Reading is to debate what is in the Bill. He is describing rather extensive incidents and I do not understand how they relate to Third Reading; perhaps he could enlighten me.

Mr. Davidson: I was trying to clarify how the Minister believed that the provisions in the Bill would deal with the detail of those circumstances. In Committee, the Minister was long on generalities and extremely short on practicalities.

People in my community—and, I am sure, in other communities—want to know how the Bill will deal with such realities. I have not heard the Minister say what differences would apply under his new system. One of the youngsters arrested at the weekend in Govan had already been charged with attempted murder, serious assault, police assault and a series of other attacks with deadly weapons. The Minister has offered no guarantee that the system will change. That is an absolute disgrace. It is obvious that the Government are not prepared to spend the money required to ensure that such youngsters are kept in some form of detention until they can appear in front of a court to be sentenced to a substantial period of incarceration.

The Minister must say how such a system can be allowed to continue and whether he is prepared to issue rules or guidance to procurators fiscal to ensure that a youngster charged on two counts of attempted murder, as in the earlier case which I mentioned, is not released back into the community to become involved in other feuds and disputes. That is clearly outrageous, and it goes to the very heart of the Bill.

The Government have said that they believe that the Bill will improve the operation of justice in Scotland. People in Scotland will believe that justice has improved only when they see action being taken against those in the community who they know are repeated offenders. The existing system does not provide for such action and therefore requires change.

7.46 pm

Mr. McFall: I welcome the opportunity to speak briefly on Third Reading. It is noticeable that all Scottish National party Members have been absent from debate on this Bill from the beginning to the very end. When it comes to detail and examining law and order, they are gone. They are good for quick sound bites and criticism, but nothing else.

Indeed, I well remember that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. Salmond), who has Peterhead in his constituency, did not participate in debates on the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Bill 1993, either. Perhaps, with the new hon. Member for Perth and Kinross (Ms Cunningham), the SNP will take more of an interest in home affairs. It should be playing an active part

in this House on issues such as those addressed in the Bill, because they are of extreme concern to the Scottish people.

The Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill is less to do with criminal justice and more to do with the administration of criminal justice. I look forward to a real criminal justice Act so that we can consider in a coherent fashion the problems facing Scotland. Scores of technical amendments have been moved tonight. That makes for bad law at the end of day. We talked earlier about miscarriages of justice because of the intentions of Parliament. It is hardly welcome having so many amendments thrown at us. The Minister kindly wrote to the Opposition to say that most of the amendments were technical, but in a year or two we may find that they were not merely technical and deserved proper scrutiny. We have not been able to give them our full attention.

The Minister mentioned that the Bill would assist the situation regarding bail bandits—those who continually contravene bail requirements. I see very little in the Bill to do that. Like a number of other hon. Members, I received a letter from the Lord Advocate on 5 June which said that he, like members of the Committee, was concerned about those offending while on bail. In his opinion, the present guidelines do not deal specifically with so-called bail bandits. He said:

"The difficulty in dealing with persistent offenders is that most of them are of an age where the imposition of a custodial sentence will almost certainly be viewed by the courts as a last resort. This is relevant to the issue of bail or remand because the courts rightly do not think it appropriate to remand an accused in custody in respect of an offence for which he is unlikely in the end to receive a custodial sentence."

As a result, the Lord Advocate has set up a working party to

"look closely at whether a more consistent approach to bail by prosecutors can be achieved."

Like us when we deal at a constituency level with the legal bodies, he knows that the prosecutor's attitude to bail can be crucial. The Lord Advocate's working party is considering

"other steps which might be taken to deal more effectively with persistent offenders. For example, it will consider what more can be done to build on the existing practice of bringing outstanding charges in respect of individual persistent offenders together in one complaint or indictment. The longer an accused is on bail awaiting trial, the greater scope there is for him to re-offend while subject to a bail order".

That explains much of what is wrong with our criminal justice system. People brought before the court know that if they plead not guilty it will delay their having to face their responsibilities. That is because of the administration of the court and its efficiency or lack of it. I submit to the Minister that the evidence from practitioners suggests that our courts are not working efficiently. Individuals can plead not guilty, and it may be a year or even two years before they have to face the consequences of their actions. That is no good for the credibility of the legal system, and there is nothing in the Bill to remedy it.

There is a crying need for a more coherent criminal justice Bill, and one that is exclusively Scottish rather than being based on the tail end of legislation that has been passed for England and Wales. I cite the provisions concerning miscarriages of justice and the right of silence, on which the Government arrived late in the day with their consultation paper.

There is a lot to learn, and the Minister is a bit complacent when he talks about less imprisonment for fine default. We are all at one in welcoming what the Government offer here, but where's the beef? What will happen? At the moment 40 per cent. of people admitted to prisons are there for fine defaulting. We all know that that is scandalous, inefficient and not economically viable, but what are we to do about it? More needs to be done; yet there is insufficient provision in the Bill to reassure the Opposition or people outside that anything will be done.

Similarly, the Bill has insufficient provisions for dealing with waiting times at court. Our courts are clogged with witnesses who are there needlessly and with police officers being paid overtime simply to hang about. That problem needs to be attended to. Innovative and radical solutions are required, but the Government have not faced up to the need for them. Yes, the Scottish Office has put out good consultation papers over the past year, but their import has not been translated into practice in the Bill.

I appeal not for the disparate approach that has been adopted hitherto, but for a coherent approach and a dedicated Scottish criminal justice Act to cover not simply the administration of justice but criminal justice itself. We welcome some of the measures that the Government have introduced, but we ask them seriously to consider introducing a coherent criminal justice Act.

7.53 pm

Dr. Godman: I promise to be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) that I am not at all surprised by the absence of the Scottish National party Members of Parliament. In my 12 years here, I have noticed that they show a distinct lack of interest in law reform and in the overwhelming need for reform of our criminal procedures.

The Bill is good in parts, but it is deficient in some respects. I tried to intervene when the Minister referred to "meritorious appeals", simply to say that to my lay mind—I am not a lawyer, as the Minister knows—our system of appeals and of protection against miscarriages of justice is much less adequate than the English system. It is no excuse simply to offer to implement the recommendations of a report that will not see the light of day until early summer next year. Those recommendations will not be implemented this side of the general election, which, with all due respect to the Minister, his party will lose.

The Bill is good in parts, but it fails to deal with the interests of vulnerable witnesses. The Minister has a first class record in seeking to protect the interests of child witnesses. Sections 33 and 35 of the Prisoners and Criminal Proceedings (Scotland) Act 1993, which I have already mentioned, bear witness to that. The growing number of television installations in our courts also bear witness to the Minister's concern for that aspect of law reform, but he has missed the opportunity offered by the Bill.

For my sins, although I do not know why, I was not selected for the Standing Committee. I would have tabled amendments there to widen the definition of vulnerable witnesses and to give them greater protection. The Minister has done much for child witnesses, but nowhere near enough for those isolated fellow citizens with

[Dr. Godman]

learning disabilities who have to come to court and give evidence. They are as vulnerable as young children in sexual abuse or child abuse cases.

I believe that the same is true of complainants in rape cases. Again, I know that the Minister as an individual and as an advocate is sympathetic to the anxieties felt by women in such cases, and since I entered the House dramatic changes have taken place in the conduct of cases involving allegations of rape, especially in cross-examinations.

There have indeed been massive and welcome improvements for such witnesses, but much more needs to be done. The same can be said about miscarriages of justice. So the Bill is good in parts, but a damned sight more needs to be done before we can say that our system is as good as the systems south of the border and elsewhere, especially in the Scandinavian countries.

7.57 pm

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: With the leave of the House, I shall reply briefly.

Of course I shall study everything that was said by the hon. Members for Dumbarton (Mr. McFall) and for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). In specific answer to the points that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Davidson) raised on behalf of his constituents, albeit on Third Reading, I am advised that the example involving the "Crossey posse" is still sub judice, so I cannot comment on that.

The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that the Bill toughens the arrangements for bail. The procedures are new and in effect allow courts to treat the fact that an offence was committed on bail as a factor to be taken into account in sentencing. The proposal to restrict access to bail is designed to send a signal to all criminals that the right to bail is not to be taken lightly or granted automatically. Where a person has committed a serious crime in the past and served a sentence of imprisonment, and then appears before a court charged with another serious crime, bail should not be an option.

Incidentally, my noble Friend the Minister of State has written to the hon. Gentleman on that subject today, and I have his letter in my hand. The hon. Gentleman may not yet have received it, but he is welcome to my copy at the end of the debate. The letter sets out the fact that the matter is covered in the guidelines issued by the Lord Advocate to procurators fiscal and to prosecutors in Scotland in general. The points that the hon. Gentleman made are being tackled not only by the provisions in the Bill but by the review of the guidelines about which the Lord Advocate has written to the hon. Member for Dumbarton.

As I said in Committee, the problems of bail abuse will be addressed in the review, and the Lord Advocate has made clear that he is updating the guidelines. The working party will complete its review by the end of the summer with a view to the guidelines being issued in the autumn. It is the Lord Advocate's intention to publish the guidelines and—if the hon. Member for Dumbarton has no objection—I shall send copies of the Lord Advocate's letter which covers that issue to him and to the hon Member for Govan.

Mr. McFall: In reply to that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would be delighted if the Minister would send a copy—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to make another speech, he must do so with the leave of the House. I thought at first that he was intervening on the Minister.

Mr. McFall: I thought that I was intervening, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am not clear. Had the Minister completed his speech?

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I shall be happy to give way if that will assist the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. McFall: I knew that I was right all along. I thank the Minister for his comments, and I shall be delighted if he will send the Lord Advocate's letter to members of the Committee. I ask him to pass on my thanks to the Lord Advocate for such a speedy response to the points raised in Committee.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENT

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees).

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

Resolved,

That this House takes note of European Community Documents Nos. 8693/94 and 8943/94, relating to a strategy to prepare the countries of Central and Eastern Europe for accession to the European Union, and No. 5928/95, relating to industrial co-operation with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe; and welcomes the agreement of the European Council at Essen to the strategy set out in Annex IV of the Council conclusions.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 84 (Constitution of standing committees), paragraph (1) of Standing Order No. 86 (Nomination of standing committees) and Standing Order No. 101 (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.) shall apply to the draft Code of Practice on Industrial Action Ballots and Notice to Employers as if it were a draft statutory instrument; and that the said draft Code be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Shalfleet Bridge, Isle of Wight

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

8.1 pm

Mr. Barry Field (Isle of Wight): I am grateful for the opportunity to have this debate. The first sadness I have is that my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary has to be detained on the Front Bench throughout the debate. My second sadness is that tonight I will break a rule and a standard that I set myself when I entered the House nearly eight years ago, which was never to use parliamentary privilege. Sadly, despite extensive correspondence between myself and the editor of the island's only newspaper, the *Isle of Wight County Press*, and between my solicitor and the editor of the newspaper, we have been unable to reach a satisfactory agreement as to the publication of the facts surrounding Shalfleet bridge.

The saga commenced in January of last year when, very unusually, I was asked while travelling to Parliament one dark and stormy night on to the bridge of the Red Jet catamaran which runs from Cowes to Southampton. Captain Jones, the master, who invited me on to the bridge, was a resident of Shalfleet. Sadly, his home had been flooded, and he was very angry.

He told me some home truths about the Shalfleet bridge saga which surprised and startled me. But while I was sympathetic to the plight of him and his family and other flooded home owners, I did not at that time see what I as a Member of Parliament could do to help, especially as the Shalfleet councillor, Steve Cowley, was also deputy leader of the county council. The county council was carrying out the repairs to Shalfleet bridge which caused the problem. Councillor Cowley is also the chairman of Shalfleet parish council.

While I was on the train, something that the captain had said to me kept nagging at the back of my mind, but I just could not put my finger on it. As fate would have it, the same captain was in charge of my return journey. By then, he had taken up some of my suggestions and had sought some independent advice. On Friday 7 January, a story appeared in the *Isle of Wight County Press* by its reporter George Chestney about the flooding. It was then that the penny finally dropped.

That article, while germane to the sorry tale, was one of the most powerful and descriptive pieces of journalism I have ever read. One could sense the water bursting through the front doors of those poor people. Their homes alongside the bridge had been flooded because props had been placed under the bridge which caused it to act like a dam.

Sadly, the article included two highly suspect pieces of information, which had apparently been taken at face value. One was about a trailer, while the other was a statement from Councillor Cowley about the National Rivers Authority's permission for props under the bridge. The impression given was that a trailer had blocked the bridge and had contributed to the flood. Although I never saw it myself, I was assured that, far from being a large farmyard trailer, it was a small camping trailer of the type towed behind a car. The consensus view in the village was that the trailer was entirely incidental to the flooding, and was a red herring.

Councillor Cowley was quoted in the article as saying:

"It is the NRA which is responsible for this stream. The County Council only strengthened the bridge with props after getting the approval of the NRA".

It was then that the penny dropped again. Councillor Cowley is a dairy farmer, and the NRA has a reputation for prosecuting farmers for polluting streams. Councillor Cowley has a real thing about the NRA.

Mr. David Evans (Welwyn Hatfield): Is Councillor Cowley a Conservative, a socialist or a Liberal?

Mr. Field: He is a Liberal Democrat. He is the deputy leader of what was the Isle of Wight county council and is now the Isle of Wight unitary authority.

As I make it a rule to doubt practically everything I read in the *Isle of Wight County Press*, I immediately contacted the NRA. I was staggered by its immediate response. I received a copy of a letter dated 8 December that was sent to the county council, in which the NRA said:

"The props are without question a potential flood hazard as any rubbish, branches washed down the watercourse, particularly in a flood, could get caught in these, thus effectively forming a dam within the watercourse. A number of dwellings could be at greater risk of flooding."

The letter goes on to say that the responsibility to ensure no blockages take place rests with the county council.

In a letter dated 18 February, the NRA points out to the council that it still has not had a reply to its letter of 8 December. Councillor Cowley told affected home owners a downright lie. He hoodwinked the *Isle of Wight County Press* and—it appears—the parish council to protect the administration of which he is the deputy leader. It was in fact his responsibility, not that of the NRA.

We were then told by the council that the bridge replacement work could not go ahead, because it had just been listed. As my hon. Friend the Minister will know, the Isle of Wight planning unit was informed at the beginning of July 1993 by English Heritage that the bridge was in a draft re-survey list to be listed—ten months before any of the work even commenced. That did not stop Councillor Cowley misleading yet again the parish council and the poor people whose homes were flooded. He again hoodwinked the ever-gullible *County Press*.

On 18 February, it reported:

"Mr. Steve Cowley told fellow parish councillors how the county council was finally thwarted in its plans to rebuild the listed stone bridge by an English Heritage official, apparently recommending that the Department of the Environment should not allow demolition."

The article goes on:

"Mr. Cowley, also a county councillor, said it could be several months before the Department of the Environment made its decision on demolition."

The plans had not been finally thwarted; the bridge had been listed nearly a month before.

The clerk to Shalfleet parish council, Mrs. Heather Freeman, wrote to me asking me to attend a public meeting of Shalfleet parish council to meet the angry residents of the village. Her letters of 10 February, 10 March, 21 April and 12 May all asked me to attend a meeting to discuss the bridge. Councillor Cowley is the chairman of Shalfleet parish council. Mrs. Freeman insisted in her correspondence that the council requested that I attend the meeting organised by the parish council,

[Mr. Field]

because, at that time, local opinion, with the help of Councillor Cowley, still favoured the view that the blame for the problems with the bridge somehow lay with the Government.

On 20 May, Heather Freeman wrote:

"I have now received a letter from Mr. Richardson, the County Surveyor, which seems to indicate that a Public Meeting about Shalfleet Bridge might be rather pointless at the moment."

The letter goes on, inter alia, to say that the council considered that it might be wasting everyone's time to hold a public meeting at that time.

There then appeared a couple of articles in the *Isle of Wight County Press*, the last of which appeared on 28 October and stated:

"Work to strengthen Shalfleet Bridge and the subsequent inconvenience caused when its supporting props were washed away could all have been avoided, it has emerged".

On 11 November, a sad letter from one of the affected residents, Mr. Telford-Bailie, was published in the *County Press*, pointing out that the press articles were completely untrue, and casting doubt on the council's "consulting engineers", who had to that date remained anonymous. That letter alone should have alerted the editor of the *County Press* to the cover-up that was taking place over that appalling scandal of lies, deceit and utter incompetence. But nothing was seen or heard by the island's only newspaper.

There are two more pieces of the jigsaw. I spent more than two hours on the telephone to the *County Press* reporter, George Chastney, during which I unfortunately lost my temper so badly that my secretaries came into my office to see whether I was all right. I had deliberately phoned him on the day that he was due to attend the Shalfleet parish council meeting.

I asked him to put those questions to Councillor Cowley, as he is also a parish councillor. I asked why the paper was refusing to investigate the serious allegations by the National Rivers Authority against the council. I demanded to know why the paper was not championing the cause of the householders whose homes had been wrecked. I asked him why the newspaper was letting the councillors and the council off the hook.

His reply was:

"I haven't been asked to write that story."

At that point, I exploded in a fit of rage. I am sure that the House would like to know that George Chastney was subsequently employed by the Isle of Wight county council as its public relations officer, a post which he still holds.

What about the people who had had more than 5 ft of water through their homes, some of whom were not adequately insured? Everyone—the island's newspaper; the county council; the parish council; and Councillor Cowley—wanted it all hushed up and swept under the carpet. They were happy to blame the NRA, the Government and the Department of National Heritage. It is nothing short of scandalous.

There is one other salient part of the jigsaw. The county council is the largest single client of the *Isle of Wight County Press* for advertising and circulars, apart from housing advertisements. When the newspaper built its new offices in Pyle street, it was left with its old premises because of the property slump. Who should come along to rent the old premises? Yes, Minister, you have guessed it: the county council. The newspaper's financial accounts at that time were beginning to look a little rocky until the council, with the people's cheque book, bailed it out by agreeing to rent its old property.

If, when my constituents read this debate, they still doubt my allegations about the *County Press* and its inability to defend the interests of its island readers and the duplicity of Councillor Cowley, who forgot the fundamental rule which every elected representative should never forget—to defend the people, not the system; he put politics before the people—they should compare for a moment the zeal with which the newspaper reported an anonymous letter from St Mary's Hospital, freemasonry, and Southern Water's lack of action in Ventnor.

With the exception of the sad death of a good friend as a result of the space given to that anonymous letter and the reporting that followed it, none of those issues could be compared to 5 ft of water pouring through people's homes because of the incompetence of the council, which Councillor Cowley perjured himself, not once but twice, to protect.

To those who will no doubt try to say that this debate is just a political exercise on my part, may I say that Councillor Barton, the Liberal leader of the council, would never have allowed the people of his ward or division to suffer in that way. He would have had the officers' guts for garters. This debate is not about my desire to see officers of the council hanging by their braces from a lamp post in Newport square with placards round their necks saying "guilty". It is about the four pillars of a free and democratic community: first, the Member of Parliament; secondly, the local council; thirdly, the parish council; and fourthly, the press.

Taking them each in turn, I am ashamed to say that my initial reaction was that I could not see how the matter involved Parliament. Secondly, the council's incompetence was compounded by ineptitude, and excused and obscured by Councillor Cowley's downright lies. To be charitable, the first lie might have been told in the heat of the moment but, by the second, he must have known the true position.

Thirdly, the parish council was full of vim and vigour while it thought that it was the Government's fault, but boy was the matter dropped like a hot potato once it knew that it was the island's fault. Fourthly, the editor of the newspaper has accused me up hill and down dale. If he put as much enthusiasm into guarding the interests of his readers as he has into avoiding publishing the facts and trying to denigrate me personally, the function of the public administration on the Isle of Wight would be much better.

One can choose any criterion to compare how the island's newspaper discharges its function of being a fearless exposer of the truth. Not a single fact has come to light about masonic influence on the decision-making process of the island's local authority. Nevertheless, acres of space in the newspaper have been devoted to freemasonry.

Numerous column inches have been given over to the prosecution of offences between homosexuals and the slightest problem with one of the privatised utilities, the health service or social security agencies. The list is

endless. All those matters have been pursued with a zeal that has sometimes bordered on religious fervour, with the notable exception of the island's local government.

I have alluded to the extraordinarily cosy relationship between the council and the *Isle of Wight County Press*, which is unhealthy and does not serve the interests of the whole island. The excuse is often given that those problems are political. The editor even said as much in this case. What, I ask the House, can possibly be political about 5 ft of water pouring through people's homes and wrecking them? It has to be pure, unalloyed bunkum.

In a debate on the Adjournment of the House, I congratulated Councillor Maureen Stalworthy on becoming the first chairman of the new unitary island council. She is a lady of principles, and has a firm sense of proprietary behaviour. She will shape the island's council, but I reiterate the opinion that the lack of a chief executive is unhelpful in a small community such as the Isle of Wight.

I have been surprised by the number of Liberals—councillors and others—who have expressed their private anxieties to me about the conduct of local government, and that rather paranoid approach to an alternative point of view, and the total cop-out, "Oh, it's political." The clerk of Shalfleet parish council, Mrs. Heather Freeman, encapsulated the anxieties nicely when she said, in her fragrant way, that she thought that the local community would be taken aback by what had happened:

"It is all a little surprising, but it is good news in a way because the scheme will be more straightforward, less expensive and will maintain the integrity of what is now a listed building."

Mrs. Freeman is the wife of the managing director of the *Isle of Wight County Press*, as well as clerk of the Shalfleet parish council.

I said at the beginning of the debate that I had three sadnesses. They were, first, that I was detaining my hon. Friend, when obviously his officials in the Department of National Heritage, the National Rivers Authority and the Department of the Environment have discharged their duties fairly and correctly in the sad saga of Shalfleet bridge. The second sadness was the fact that I had been placed in a position in which I have had to use parliamentary privilege rather than set those matters aright in our own community on the island. My final sadness is that we have a saying on the Isle of Wight, "If you kick one islander, they all limp." The real loser in this sorry saga has been the island itself.

In every company of which I have been a director, all the shareholders have always had an excellent deal. As a director of a building society, the depositors expected from me a high standard of financial probity. As long as I am the Member of Parliament for the Isle of Wight, it will be my aim to ensure that the highest standards of administration pertain throughout the island. In the saga of events that led to the flooding of those people's homes beside the Shalfleet bridge, they have not. That reflects badly on us all—on myself, the councils, the councillors and the press.

It is my earnest hope that the debate will be—no pun intended—a watershed, and that we shall never forget that we all have a duty of responsibility to the people who elect us, not to one party or another, and certainly a duty not to defend the indefensible when an administrative cock-up occurs. That must surely include and involve the island's only newspaper.

I chose, of all the aspects that I might have chosen to highlight in the debate tonight, the listing of the Shalfleet bridge, because the Department of National Heritage is responsible for that matter and for the media. Although I vehemently oppose any control of freedom of the press, it is obvious that the *Isle of Wight County Press* must pull its socks up considerably and defend the interests of all its readers much more rigorously.

8.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for National Heritage (Mr. Iain Sproat): My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field) has made an important and powerful speech this evening, and I congratulate him on the courage and dignity that he has shown in bringing that matter before Parliament. As he rightly said, my Department is concerned with but a small part of the sorry saga that he related tonight, although it is indeed responsible for the press.

I propose to set out in some detail what my Department did about the bridge and its listing, so that my hon. Friend may know exactly what the facts are, as I believe them to be from the point of view of my Department, and so that he has on the record exactly what happened, with accuracy and with truth, at least in the part of the tale that he has unfolded this evening. It may be helpful if, first, I explain, from the point of view of my Department, the circumstances leading to the listing of the bridge.

Following a review of buildings on the Isle of Wight, English Heritage had submitted to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage a draft revised list of buildings of special architectural or historic interest for the island, which it recommended for listing. The Shalfleet bridge was one of the structures included in the list for the first time.

That list was under consideration in my Department when, in view of an application for planning permission before the local planning authority for the demolition and rebuilding of the bridge, we were asked by the Isle of Wight joint planning technical unit on 20 January 1994 for an immediate decision on whether it was to be listed. Accordingly, the bridge was listed on that day, my right hon. Friend having carefully considered the advice from English Heritage that it met the listing criteria.

In considering whether to add a building to the statutory list, the only factor that the law allows my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to take into account is whether it possesses special architectural or historic interest. The law does not allow him to consider other factors, such as the building's state of repair—unless it has harmed its architectural interest—its maintenance costs or its unsuitability for modern needs.

Such matters are not relevant to a listing decision. However, they can properly be taken into account in the context of any subsequent application for listed building consent for works connected with the demolition, alteration or extension of a building.

If my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is satisfied that a building meets the listing criteria, the law does not allow him any option other than to list it. Once a building is listed, works to it are subject to control under the "listed building consent" procedures, which are operated, in the first instance, by the local planning authority.

[Mr. Iain Sproat]

Listed building consent is required for the demolition of a listed building, or any other alteration or extension that affects its character as a listed building. There is a right of appeal to the Secretary of State for the Environment where consent is refused. Where the local authority itself wishes to carry out works to a listed building, as was the case with Shalfleet bridge, it must obtain consent from the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Although listing creates a presumption in favour of preservation, it does not necessarily mean that the building or structure concerned must remain intact for all time. Indeed, we fully acknowledge that, in many cases, some change may be essential to ensure that a listed building remains in active use. The main purpose of listing is to register the special interest of a building, in order that that can be weighed against arguments in favour of its demolition, alteration or extension, if and when an application for listed building consent is made.

It is entirely logical that the listing process should confine itself to the consideration of the merits of a building, while the listed building control, which can take into account wider issues, comes into play only when there are proposals that will affect the special character of a listed building.

I appreciate that the requirement to obtain listed building consent can cause delay in the implementation of some important proposals. Indeed, I fully acknowledge that the listing of Shalfleet bridge delayed implementation of the solution to the problem of the bridge strengthening. However, it is entirely justifiable that there should be an opportunity to take stock and consider, with considerable care, whether there are ways of achieving the required objectives which are compatible with preserving the special interest of our historic buildings and structures.

Broadly speaking, we believe that time has shown that the present system provides the right framework for identifying buildings that are worthy of preservation, within which proposals to alter or demolish them can be fully assessed and all relevant factors taken into account. After all, as I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree, without the listings, many of our finest buildings might not have survived to this day.

It is indeed unfortunate that the repair work to Shalfleet bridge was delayed, but it appears that a permanent solution has now been implemented, which meets the concerns of all interested parties.

Mr. Barry Field: My hon. Friend shares the surprise that those poor villagers had—and that I had when I inquired into the matter—that it now appears that the demolition of the bridge was never necessary in the first place. The props that were put under it, which caused it to dam up, were drawn to the attention of the council by the National Rivers Authority as being extremely dangerous. It is a saga that never needed to happen. The bridge has been adequately reinforced and strengthened for the traffic it takes, and will be a memorial there for ever, as a very pretty piece of architecture on the Isle of Wight.

Mr. Sproat: My hon. Friend is certainly right—the bridge need not be demolished. It was decided not to demolish it; it was decided to strengthen it. I understand that the strengthening of the bridge, which has now taken place, is cheaper than the estimate for the rebuilding of the bridge.

With those few words about one small aspect of my hon. Friend's important speech, I leave him to take the matter forward with all the dedication to justice that he has shown.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-nine minutes past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 8 June 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ACCOMMODATION LEVEL CROSSINGS BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)

QUEEN MARY AND WESTFIELD COLLEGE BILL (*By Order*)
Orders for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 15 June.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES (No. 2) BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)
Orders for consideration read.
To be considered on Thursday 15 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

British Food

1. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to encourage the consumption of food produced in the United Kingdom. [25812]

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mrs. Angela Browning): My ministerial colleagues and I take every opportunity, through our marketing grants and other practical help, to encourage the industry to improve its marketing performance.

Mr. Spring: Can my hon. Friend assure the House that support for home-produced British food, which is so excellent, also comes from the private sector? Can she also assure the House that she and her fellow Ministers will set a best-practice personal example by eating good British food at all appropriate opportunities?

Mrs. Browning: On the first point, I commend to my hon. Friend and the House the excellent work of Food From Britain, which this year will receive £5 million from the Government and which also attracts money from the private sector. On the second point, I can confirm to the House that since I was appointed Minister for Food a year ago, I have done my best to eat British food, and have gone up one dress size as a result.

Mr. Tyler: Does the Minister acknowledge that the best way to assist home producers will be to prevent unfair competition from exports from other states? In that regard, can she confirm that the Minister's statement that he found very powerful the case for restricting imports of foods and food products into this country from other member states of the European Union, where the same standard of hygiene and animal welfare do not apply, is one that she is examining carefully? Can she further confirm that, under the treaty of Rome, there is nothing to stop the Minister using his powers to prevent those foods from being put into the British market, which puts our consumers in an unfortunate position?

Mrs. Browning: The hon. Gentleman will know that there are strict rules on hygiene within the Community and also in the trade that we do with countries outside the Community. The Ministry would always take the necessary action to make sure that food that had a question mark against it in terms of hygiene was taken out of the food chain and that the necessary steps were taken. My right hon. Friend the Minister has demonstrated clearly his desire, against a free-trade background, to encourage both hygiene and welfare-friendly food. Obviously, the best way to do that within the single market is by Europe-wide agreement and enforcement.

Mr. Fabricant: My hon. and slim Friend is far too young to remember that there used to be a "Buy British" campaign. Will she and her Department consider introducing an "Eat English" campaign? If she is clever enough, she may be able to think of a similar phrase for the Welsh and the Scottish. When is she going to promote Britain even more than she already does?

Mrs. Browning: I accept the compliment from one so young, and thank him for it. It is interesting to note that "Produce of England" is a label that is now put on food sold in Paris by Marks and Spencer because the French and other nations seek out English food. In Paris, £40,000-worth of British sandwiches, made in this country, are sold. Throughout the capital of France, they seek out British muffins. Around the world, one can see the success of the British food industry.

Mr. Martyn Jones: One way to encourage the consumption of home-produced food is to discourage imports. What does the Minister intend to do about the estimated 80,000 tonnes of Spanish lettuce which we believe is imported at below-cost price?

Mrs. Browning: On discouraging imports, the answer is to encourage and support import substitution. Through the good quality, safe food which we have in this country, we can persuade UK consumers to seek out UK-produced food. The hon. Gentleman will know that the lettuce industry is currently jeopardised because of an absurd decision about nitrate levels in lettuces. My hon. Friend the Minister of State is working hard to ensure that the English lettuce industry survives, people eat British lettuces, and those European nonsenses that arise from time to time are batted away as quickly as possible.

Farm Land

2. **Mr. Key:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what he is doing to help make more rented land available to people who want to enter farming. [25813]

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. William Waldegrave): The Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995, which comes into force on 1 September this year, will encourage landowners to let more land. This will be reinforced by 100 per cent. relief from inheritance tax for land in new tenancies granted on or after 1 September. That is good news for new entrants to farming.

Mr. Key: That is indeed good news. Will my right hon. Friend now turn his attention to county council farms? Would it not be sensible to promote mobility across the whole farming sector? In Wiltshire alone, 13,000 acres of land are in public ownership with 127 tenancies, the average of which is 26 years. That hardly promotes mobility. Those are excellent farmers, but they need an opportunity one way or another. One way might be to sell the farms to those farmers in the same way as selling council houses; another way might be to introduce short-term tenancies. Will my right hon. Friend look at that problem?

Mr. Waldegrave: It is a matter for the counties concerned, but the figures that my hon. Friend gives show that, in his county—I suspect that other counties are the same—county farms do little to bring in new entrants because of the length of tenancies granted. If the new Act works in the medium term as we hope, it will do far more for new entrants even than county farms have done in the past.

Mr. Hardy: Does the Minister agree that it is essential to ensure that the rural population of many areas is maintained? Does he accept that, if holdings are small, new incomers to farming may find it difficult to make a decent livelihood?

Mr. Waldegrave: There is something in what the hon. Gentleman says. The Government will look at the health of the rural economy more widely when we publish a White Paper later this year. In some areas, farming still plays an important part in that, although we must widen the source of jobs available in the countryside. The hon. Gentleman makes a good point, however.

Horticulture

3. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the contribution his research and development budget can make to extending the availability of home-grown horticulture produce. [25814]

The Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Mr. Michael Jack): An assessment of the Ministry's research and development budget shows that work on improved crop varieties and seasonal extensions will continue to improve the availability of home-grown horticultural produce.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my hon. Friend for his response. Will he confirm that his R and D programmes are designed to make our domestic producers the best in the world, and able to compete with Europe and the rest of the world? Will he also confirm that research moneys which he is giving are used in conjunction with private industry's research funds?

Mr. Jack: I confirm both those points to my hon. Friend. The work that we have been doing includes the £41 million restructuring of the Horticultural Research Institute, which gives it an opportunity to become one of the best science-based aids to the whole of the United Kingdom horticultural industry and puts it on a good basis to receive money from the Horticultural Development Council. We can go further than that. With the "Technology Foresight" exercise on which we are embarking, on strawberries, mushrooms and apples, we shall look to the future technological needs of the industry.

Live Animal Exports

4. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he has studied the legal opinion obtained by the RSPCA on the export of veal calves and EC law; and if he will make a statement. [25815]

Mr. Waldegrave: I informed the House of the results of my considerations of this matter in my response to a question from the hon. Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner) on 22 May.

Mr. Mullin: Would the Secretary of State like to publish the legal advice that he has received? He has had a rough time this week, and one way to clean up his image a bit might be to be a little more open on the export of calves to countries that operate the odious veal crate. Further to his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Nuneaton (Mr. Olner), does he agree that there will come a time when we can ban unilaterally the export of calves to countries that use veal crates? That will make more impression on our allies than simply being nice to them.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his solicitude, which is very usual from him.

Unfortunately, I am clearly advised that the argument used in the Barling advice, which we studied extremely carefully, does not justify any unilateral action. I believe that we are well on the way to winning the campaign to ban the veal crates, about which the hon. Gentleman and I share the same opinion—most people in the House share that opinion. It would be very unwise to take action that was then struck down by the courts, as that would remove the issue to the European Court of Justice, perhaps for years, just at the moment when we are on the way—if the veterinary report that is coming in to the Community says what I believe that it will say—to winning the argument.

Mr. Knapman: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the way forward is not to ban veal calf exports, which would have a devastating effect on our farmers, but to ban veal crates in Europe, which is an initiative that we have already taken?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. If we are interested in the animal welfare outcome, there would be nothing especially smart about banning calves that come only from this country—even if we could do it—if they were immediately replaced in the same veal crates in Belgium, or wherever it is, by calves that come from somewhere else.

The object is to get rid of that practice. We have powerful allies around Europe for doing so—Germany is alongside us on that, as are the Scandinavian countries and others—and I believe that we shall win the argument. That would be a far greater gain for animal welfare, without placing our farmers in jeopardy.

Dr. Strang: I assure the Minister that we stand four square behind our commitment to give Europe a lead on that issue by stopping the export of veal calves from this country into continental veal crates. I also remind him that, in January, he declared that the days of veal crates throughout Europe were numbered—I remind him, days. Will he tell us when he now expects veal crates to be banned throughout the European Union?

Mr. Waldegrave: On the first point, I have already explained why I believe that the hon. Gentleman's gesture politics in that respect would set the cause back, for the following reason. If he introduced his unilateral ban—which would be challenged, as the Commission has warned that it would be challenged, straight away—the whole thing would be in the long grass of legal dispute, perhaps for years.

As I said in January, the Scientific Veterinary Committee of the Community will bring its report back to the Council, probably in September or October. We have a majority in the Council if that Committee recommends the banning of veal crates, as I believe that it will, so there is a good chance that the decision will be taken before the end of this year. That is a far greater outcome for animal welfare than the gesture that the hon. Gentleman recommends.

Common Agricultural Policy

5. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when he next expects to meet his EU colleagues to discuss the further reform of the common agricultural policy. [25816]

9. **Mrs. Gorman:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the effects of recent attempts to reform the common agricultural policy. [25820]

Mr. Waldegrave: The next Agriculture Council is scheduled for 19 and 20 June. I will continue to press for further improvements to the common agricultural policy at this and every other suitable opportunity, in order to build on the achievements of the 1992 reforms.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Can my right hon. Friend spell out to the House his vision of a reformed CAP? What would it look like? Does he, for example, favour the progressive reduction of support prices to world levels?

Mr. Waldegrave: As my hon. Friend knows, I shall produce a report on that very matter, setting out my opinions in detail. However, in principle I do not think that anyone doubts that we need a policy that moves far closer to the market, and that deals with the real issues of environmental and social support, where they are rightly to be supported in the countryside, explicitly and not by agricultural policy. It is expensive and inefficient to use high food prices for those purposes.

Mrs. Gorman: I do not know whether my right hon. Friend goes grocery shopping, but is it not true that the British housewife pays twice as much for her groceries as she needs to? Is it not true that, if she went to the United States—which I admit is a long way to go for shopping—she would find groceries on sale for half the price, in a country where salaries are generally almost double ours? Is it not true that the common agricultural policy is nothing more than a rip-off of the British taxpayer? It cannot be reformed. Is it not true that we should repatriate those powers and return to a system of supporting our own farmers, as we used to do, with agricultural supports?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right: if one goes shopping in America one finds that food prices are very much lower than they are in Europe. As a matter of fact, the common agricultural policy is not only expensive for the British consumer but is now proving expensive for consumers throughout Europe. I doubt whether a single country in Europe is deriving net economic benefit from the CAP. It must be radically reformed. However, I do not agree with my hon. Friend that repatriation is the best way forward. Repatriation is likely to mean the re-emergence of competitive protection and competitive state aids, supports and subsidies, which would damage British farming as well as the consumer.

Mr. Enright: Will the Minister spell out on each occasion that he proposes necessary reforms of the CAP exactly how much the salaries of British farmers will be reduced as a consequence?

Mr. Waldegrave: The calculations are interesting but difficult. If we stop the artificial dumping of subsidised foods on to world markets, world prices will rise. Farmers have less to fear from a world where there is freer competition because of that increase in world prices. The drastic experiment of New Zealand, which was forced to abolish all subsidies overnight—no one is proposing that here—shows that competitive farming can come through, even when farmers are competing with subsidised farming elsewhere.

Mr. Stevenson: When the Secretary of State has discussions with our European Union partners, will he raise the issue of the agrimonetary system? The Secretary of State will know that a significant proportion of the 6 per cent. increase in farm incomes is a result of the devaluation of sterling and the agrimonetary system. What specific proposals does the Secretary of State have in mind to reform that chaotic system, which costs the taxpayer a lot of money? How will he reconcile any reform with the need to ensure that there is no significant reduction in farm incomes as a result?

Mr. Waldegrave: We talked about long-term reform in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold). The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right, in that we face a real and imminent problem with regard to agrimoney. That issue will come up at the next Council meeting.

Britain's additional green pound devaluations are caused largely by the refusal of countries with stronger currencies, such as Germany, to allow revaluations. That makes the system break down completely and adds to net costs. We are strongly opposed to that and we are arguing, on the same side as the Commission, that revaluation should be allowed to take place within the agrimonetary system. If that does not happen, British food processors will be severely disadvantaged, as is beginning to occur already.

Sir Jerry Wiggin: Is it not a fact that the size and structure of farms in the United Kingdom is very different from that in all other countries in the European Union?

Will my right hon. Friend ensure that that fact is taken into account very firmly when considering reform of the common agricultural policy?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend. What is considered to be a small farm in the United Kingdom is a large farm in virtually every other country in the European Community. That is why we are opposed to what is called, in Euro-jargon, modulation—that is, shifting all the support to aim at small farms. Small farms in Europe are minuscule farms here, and that kind of policy would seriously damage British farming.

Mr. Skinner: When will the Minister realise that all the talk about the long-term and a further review of the common agricultural policy is not in his best interests? If he wants to see anything done about the common agricultural policy and get his name in the history books, he had better do it sharpish, before he gets sacked.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am grateful for the all-party support that I am being offered. I will do my best to meet the hon. Gentleman's time scale.

Departmental Expenditure

6. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which Minister or office in his Department is responsible for overseeing the fundamental review of public expenditure in his Department; and if he will make a statement on the level of possible savings. [25817]

Mr. Waldegrave: Officials conducting the fundamental expenditure review are reporting to me. It is too early to say what savings might arise from the review.

Mr. Jenkin: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. I hope that he will be in charge of the fundamental review of public expenditure in his Department because, unless it is driven by politicians, it is unlikely that there will be much of a review at all. My question may be connected with the previous one in that, if we want to see a reduction in the costs of government, there may have to be a reduction in the costs of the agricultural policy in Europe as well as reform; otherwise, it is not really reform in the proper sense of the word.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is perfectly right. As I said in answer to an earlier question, the first battle is to get some sense into the agrimonetary system. That threatens to drive up costs in the short term, which would be really disastrous. The frustration for my Department is that those parts of our expenditure that are entirely under the control of Ministers answering to the House and are without the structure of the agricultural policy—our marketing grants and our environmental grants—would be genuinely supported on both sides of the House as being rather well targeted, but the pressure is always on them, because we cannot make unilateral cuts in the CAP fund.

Ms Janet Anderson: Will the Minister tell us how much his Department spends every year on tribunals of appeal against Ministry decisions to close slaughterhouses? Does he believe that cleanliness and hygiene should be taken into account when determining those appeals?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Lady has a particular case in mind in her own constituency and I shall write to her with the answer. I do not think that we have had any expenditure on those appeals, because the tribunal has only just been set up alongside the Meat Hygiene Service. I shall write with more details to the hon. Lady.

Mr. John Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that, while the search for further savings in his Department's expenditure is important, it must not, under any circumstances, be achieved by a further reduction in the support paid to hill farmers through the hill livestock compensatory allowance? Hill farm incomes are falling and the HLCAs should increase, not reduce.

Mr. Waldegrave: I hear clearly the message from my hon. Friend, and I am sure that we shall endeavour to take that into account in our discussions with the Treasury in the expenditure round.

Live Animal Exports

7. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what concerns have been expressed to him concerning the conditions under which farm animals are exported. [25818]

Mrs. Browning: We continue to make a large number of representations expressing concern about the live export trade.

Mr. Corbyn: Is the Minister aware that hundreds of thousands of people around the country are deeply concerned about the treatment of farm animals during export? They have been demonstrating peacefully at many ports, and some have been disgracefully treated and prosecuted under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994. The Department claims that it is trying to persuade European countries not to allow veal calves to go into crates. As that has been so unsuccessful, would it not be better to put a one-off ban on the export of live animals to force others to recognise that people in Britain take animal welfare seriously and are not prepared to see such barbaric conditions continue for calves reared in Britain?

Mrs. Browning: I am aware of the concern in the country about the welfare of farm animals in transit. The hon. Gentleman has been in the House since 2.30 pm and will have heard my right hon. Friend the Minister explain clearly why unilateral action on our part is not only not practical, but not in the long-term interests of animal welfare generally. As for his point about people protesting, peaceful protests are the democratic right of people in Britain. However, I abhor those people who break the law, subject others to violence and quite rightly come before the courts.

Mr. Garnier: May I assure my hon. Friend that, whatever the views of the window box owners of north Islington, the farmers of south-east Leicestershire are concerned that there should not be a ban on the export of live animals, although they fully accept that there is no need to have cruel exports? Will she reassure the House that she will do her best to ensure that the live animal export regime continues?

Mrs. Browning: That is what my right hon. Friend has been doing in his efforts to persuade the Community to raise its standards to those of the United Kingdom. We believe that we have the highest standards in Europe, and this is an opportunity for other countries in Europe and

elsewhere to raise their standards to meet ours. I assure my hon. and learned Friend that, if his farmers and those people who transport animals abide by the regulations and codes of practice, they have nothing to fear and the trade will certainly continue.

Children (Diets)

8. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what initiatives his Department is taking to improve the diet of children. [25819]

Mrs. Browning: We are preparing advice to parents about healthy diets for pre-school children and we are considering a version of our booklets written especially for school children. We continue to provide substantial funding to the British Nutrition Foundation for its teaching pack for schools entitled "Food: A fact of life".

Mr. Williams: I am pleased to hear about the advice prepared for parents and children, but what about the manufacturers? A survey by the Minister's Department and the Department of Health published earlier this year showed that children under five consumed double the recommended intakes of salt and sugar. Children are daily bombarded with advertisements for chocolates, sweets, crisps and junk food, with the result that there has been a deterioration recently in their dental health. Every year, 25,000 children under the age of five have a tooth extracted. What is the Department doing to persuade manufacturers to cease some of their advertising of junk food for children?

Mrs. Browning: I deplore the term "junk food", which implies that all convenience and snack foods are not healthy. That is not true. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, however. The Department is working hard, in conjunction with other Departments—especially the Department of Health—to make sure that we put the information in the public domain so that people can make informed choices.

Children of school age have quite a bit of disposable income, in terms of pocket money and earnings. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will be reassured to know that the Ministry and manufacturers have worked with the nutrition task force to put information packs into schools, up to key stage 4, to ensure that children are taught about diet and nutrition. I hope that, in this way, we shall be able to influence the next generation to make informed choices.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon. Friend agree that the most effective way of improving children's diets is to ensure that the prices of fruit, vegetables, cereals, fish and other commodities in the shops are kept as low as possible? Does she agree that that can best be achieved by discarding the nonsensical aspects of the common agricultural policy that cover those commodities?

Mrs. Browning: My hon. Friend will have heard my right hon. Friend's reply about the task force which is looking at the best way of reforming the CAP. His point about fruit and vegetables is important. I suggest that people buy seasonal fruit and vegetables, rather than what are often the more expensive fruit and vegetables, now fortunately available to everyone but not necessarily the most economic. People should buy the more traditional fruits and vegetables which are in season and which constitute good value for money, thereby contributing to children's and adults' diets.

Mr. Salmond: Does the Minister agree that one of the key aspects of the diet of children is keeping them safe from infections such as listeria? Is it therefore a sensible Government policy to propose the closure of the Torry food science laboratory in Aberdeen, which has a reputation of excellence in this and a number of other areas? Does she accept that the overwhelming body of opinion in the north-east of Scotland favours saving that vital scientific facility? On precisely what date did the proposal to close it appear on her desk or the desk of the Minister?

Mrs. Browning: I know that the hon. Gentleman has had an opportunity to discuss that with my right hon. Friend. I cannot today give him the exact date, but he will know that the work carried out by the laboratory will be continued elsewhere, so there is no threat to human health or food safety. My right hon. Friend will have heard the hon. Gentleman this afternoon, and I shall ensure that he is kept informed as soon as a date is known.

Common Agricultural Policy

10. **Mr. McLoughlin:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps are being taken to eradicate fraud in the common agricultural policy. [25821]

Mr. Waldegrave: At the Essen European Council last December, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made a number of proposals to help tackle fraud, as well as waste and mismanagement. These are now being taken forward. They include a requirement for the annual reporting on national action to combat fraud and waste. The Government are giving the Commission full support in its efforts to take more effective action against fraud.

Mr. McLoughlin: I am grateful for that answer. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that there is relatively little agricultural fraud in the United Kingdom? Is he aware of the annoyance caused to our farmers when they see other countries—Italy, for instance—getting away with what is seen as large-scale fraud, particularly to do with milk quotas?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am strongly aware of those feelings, which is why we have successfully pressed the Commission to take more formidable action. My hon. Friend will know that, as a result of a wholly British initiative, Italy, Spain and Greece were taken to the court over milk quotas, and in the end £2.5 billion was taken off them in the form of fines—the biggest single disallowance in the history of the Community, I believe.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that, despite the Government having had 16 years to try to eradicate fraud within the CAP, fraud is still a major problem? Why should we believe now that the Government, whose time is fast running out, will solve the problem in their dying months?

Mr. Waldegrave: The level of fraud in the United Kingdom, where the Government have a direct role, is very low, as my hon. Friend the Member for West Derbyshire (Mr. McLoughlin) said. In the last year when the accounts were fully closed, which, surprisingly, was

1991, we had only £2 million of £1.2 billion-worth of fines. That shows that the British record is good. We have been making efforts—they have been increasingly successful—with other countries, such as the Scandinavian states that have recently joined the Community, to ensure that standards are raised elsewhere. That is beginning to happen.

Mr. Nicholls: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the worst vice in the common agricultural policy is that the British are inclined to obey rules while most continental farmers are inclined to disobey them? Surely the best reform would be for us to get out of the CAP now and become self-sufficient in agriculture.

Mr. Waldegrave: Much the best outcome is to maintain a single market with a proper, level playing field, which involves the avoidance of illegal state aids and of fraud, rather than asking British farmers to compete against farmers abroad who are subsidised by their Governments. That is what our farmers want, and that is the agriculture policy that we need in future.

Dr. Strang: Has the Minister seen the Commission's admission that there is now proof that criminal organisations have been successfully claiming butter export subsidies when they have not been exporting butter? Will he admit that, every year, hundreds of millions of pounds of agriculture export subsidies are claimed fraudulently?

Mr. Waldegrave: Not in this country. I am extremely pleased that the Commission is becoming far more realistic about the extent of fraud elsewhere. That is the first stage in stamping out fraud. We have been supporting the Commission's blacklist proposal—I believe that it was our proposal originally. When implemented, it will greatly toughen the handling of export subsidies. That realistic appreciation of the scale of the problem must come first if action is to be taken.

Bull Fighting

11. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will urge at the next European Council of Ministers for the termination of European Union moneys for the rearing of bulls for bull fighting. [25823]

Mr. Jack: The agenda for the next Agriculture Council does not include that item for discussion.

Mr. Wilkinson: I am hardly surprised. Waiting for an end to the European subsidy to the beef special premium is about as fruitful as waiting for the cows to come home. Would it not be much better for the Government unilaterally to stop subsidising the rearing of bulls for execution in the bull rings of Pamplona and Aragon? The qualities of these animals are hardly culinary; I would have thought that their qualities are much more combative.

Mr. Jack: I share my hon. Friend's concern about the repugnant practice of bull fighting. He must take into account, however, the fact that British specialist beef producers gain, to the tune of about £119 million, from the scheme. In the way in which the scheme is constructed, it would not be possible unilaterally to implement my hon. Friend's suggestion. We shall be asking the Commission, in appraising the effectiveness of the beef special premium scheme, to re-examine the matter.

Mr. Tony Banks: If the Minister of State shares the concern of his hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood (Mr. Wilkinson), why does he not raise the issue directly? If he did that, we would know that he is serious in what he says. We shall judge Ministers by their actions and not their words. It is appalling that we should be subsidising bull fighting. It is a barbaric activity. Will the hon. Gentleman join me in encouraging British tourists who go to Spain to stay away from bull fighting?

Mr. Jack: The hon. Gentleman makes his own point. Those considering holidaying in Spain—perhaps even Opposition Members—will listen to what he has to say.

We have already had one go in attacking the practice by reducing the overall level of expenditure on the scheme. We have made it clear to the Commission that we would welcome its positive proposals on the issue. As I said to my hon. Friend the Member for Ruislip-Northwood, we shall urge the Commission to appraise the worthwhileness of the beef special premium scheme in this context.

Common Fisheries Policy

12. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what attempts he has made to involve the fishing industry in his CFP reform group. [25824]

Mr. Jack: All sections of the industry have been invited to contribute their ideas to the common fisheries policy review group.

Mr. Atkinson: Does my hon. Friend agree that the conservation of our fishing stocks must be paramount in any future reform of the CFP? How does he intend to involve the fishing industry in plans to implement the December agreement?

Mr. Jack: On both counts—the arrangements for the western waters and conservation—we have had many useful meetings with the fishing industry. It is fully involved in that work.

On the new arrangements from 1 January next year, we have secured from the Commission an agreement that there will be, as part of its package of implementing regulations, proposals on conservation. I have also secured an additional benefit: it will review the minimum landing sizes. That, combined with good conservation gear, can make a big contribution to long-term fish conservation.

Dr. Godman: Any reform of the CFP, or a campaign for such reform, should surely advocate a complete ban of all industrial fishing in the North sea and elsewhere. To that end, should not the reform of the CFP be looking at the regional management and regional preferences for fishermen who are based in the more fragile fishing communities?

Mr. Jack: I always find it sad when somebody who follows fishing matters as closely as the hon. Gentleman does not acknowledge the lead that the United Kingdom has taken on the whole question of industrial fishing.

It was we who got the Commission to agree to the scientific study—the results of which we are awaiting—to look into this whole matter. The science is complex. We are troubled and concerned by this issue and we keep the pressure up, as we will at the North sea conference, to deal with the matter.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, we have in fact invited Mr. Alain Laurec, in Directorate-General XIV, the No. 2 official in the Commission, who deals with this particular matter, to come to talk to us about some of the regionalisation ideas that are being discussed. It is a very important issue in the dynamics of Europe's future fishing policy.

Mr. Harris: Does my hon. Friend accept that there is a massive danger that, when the CFP comes up for complete review in 2002, we could have a repetition of the disgraceful events that occurred before Christmas over Spanish access to the Irish box, when we were outvoted because of the system of qualified majority voting? Therefore, will he take up my suggestion with other Ministers and look at the possibility of trying to get restoration of the veto for the final decision on the CFP review?

Mr. Jack: My hon. Friend is right in his own way to raise the question of protecting our vital national interests. He discusses it in the context of the veto. At least that is the kind of idea that comes from Conservative Members; Opposition Members would do away with vetoes left right and centre. I shall certainly reflect on what my hon. Friend says, and I can assure him that, in any further discussions on reform of the CFP, Britain's vital national interests will be at the top of our agenda.

Mr. Morley: Has the Minister had a chance to see the evidence submitted by Dr. Mark Tasker, of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, to the North sea conference, which suggested that, unless urgent steps are taken on fish stocks, North sea cod as a commercial stock will be extinct in five years? Are we to see some meaningful progress towards tackling pollution, tackling industrial fisheries and bringing in closed areas before fish and chips becomes a luxury food?

Mr. Jack: As somebody who enjoys his fish and chips and grew up not far from Harry Ramsden's fish and chip shop, I have some sympathy with what the hon. Gentleman says. I have seen the evidence that Dr. Tasker has put forward, but I think that he may be exaggerating, shall we say, to make a particular point. The hon. Gentleman, who, again, follows fishing matters closely, will know that the scientists advised last year that there should be a 30 per cent. reduction in effort on cod, and that was in fact reflected in the cod quota agreed at last December's Fisheries Council; so Ministers do listen to that point. I do not think that there will be a total collapse of the cod stock in the North sea, because there are about 500 million cod there already.

Rural White Paper

13. **Mr. Peter Ainsworth:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to learn about the views of rural organisations, as part of the rural White Paper exercise. [25825]

Mr. Waldegrave: Our consultation letter received over 360 responses from organisations and individuals. In addition, my colleagues from the Department of the Environment and I have been conducting regional seminars with a wide range of rural interests.

Mr. Ainsworth: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, although it is not easy, it is very important to strike the right balance between protecting the interests of those who live and work in the countryside and protecting and enhancing our natural heritage? Does he think that the recent review of agri-environment policy makes important proposals in that context, and deserves wide support?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is right. He has been a great campaigner for some of the conservation measures that we are now enacting—those relating to historic hedgerows, for instance. He has made an important point about the countryside. We must not view it as some kind of museum; it is a place where people live and work, and we must give them space in which to do so.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Legg:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 June. [25842]

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Legg: Following last week's launch of the European Commission's blueprint for the introduction of a single currency, will my right hon. Friend confirm that during the lifetime of this Parliament he will not make any commitments, or support any proposals, for the United Kingdom to subscribe to a timetable for joining the single currency?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly confirm that. I do not believe that the question of joining a single currency will in practice arise for some time, and I confirm my hon. Friend's proposition. Arguably, the circumstances may not ever be right, and it is for that reason that I have preserved the House's right to make its own decision as and when the practical time for a decision may arise. Even if that time does arise, we should need to consider not only the economic conditions but the political and constitutional implications.

Mr. Blair: Does the Prime Minister accept that, as a result of the withdrawal of mortgage help for those who become unemployed, the vast majority of home owners—particularly new home owners—will have to take out mortgage insurance? What is his estimate of the cost of that policy to a home owner with an average mortgage?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, any responsible Government must review the size of the social security budget—now running at well over £80 million of taxpayers' money. As for the cost, the right hon. Gentleman may have seen—as I have—the news that the Skipton building society proposes to introduce cover for all its borrowers without increasing premiums.

I believe that lenders should recognise their obligation to protect home owners, and I hope that others will do the same.

Mr. Blair: I assume that the Prime Minister is holding that out as an example of what is going to happen. Does he say that there will be any additional cost? If so, what is his estimate?

The Prime Minister: I am sorry that my first reply clearly flummoxed the right hon. Gentleman. I was holding out what is being done by the Skipton building society as an example of best practice, and I very much hope that other people will have to pay—

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Who is paying?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman shouts, "Who is paying?" Despite what the Labour party has to say about holding down public expenditure, both he and his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition seem keen that the taxpayer should pay on every occasion.

Mr. Blair: The Prime Minister has failed to deal with the fact that the vast majority of home owners will have to pay more for his policy. If he cannot give us an estimate of the cost, what does he say to this morning's reports that the insurance claims of many people who have cover are not even met? Would it not be sensible to reconsider a policy that is, in effect, a tax on every home owner, will mean more repossessions and will depress an already depressed housing market?

The Prime Minister: One would hardly imagine, to listen to the right hon. Gentleman, that, as far as housing is concerned, a Labour study group, for example, threatened to abolish mortgage interest relief totally.

On the particular point about insurance, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has made clear, we wish to have a high-quality, comprehensive system of mortgage insurance to minimise the danger of home owners losing their home through misfortune. In terms of best practice, I have already said what the cost might be. I hope that other people will look towards that best practice. My right hon. Friend has been working with the Association of British Insurers to develop guidelines for the best practice of mortgage protection insurance and many new, quality products are emerging. That is very much the reason why I welcome initiatives like that from Skipton.

Q2. **Mr. Colin Shepherd:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 June. [25843]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Shepherd: Is my right hon. Friend aware that no one living in Herefordshire now need wait more than nine months for hospital in-patient treatment, and that that significant progress, along with much else, has come about during the first year of the operation of the Hereford hospitals national health service trust? Is that not a good example of the success of health service reforms, and does he agree that it would be crazy to reverse those changes, especially along the lines of the proposals espoused this week by the Labour party?

Mr. Mackinlay: Assume that the answer is yes and let us get on with it.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman says that the answer is yes, but I very much doubt that he will ever be here to give the answer, either yes or no. I am pleased to hear of the success of my hon. Friend's local hospital trust. I recall that it was not all that long ago that the Opposition Front-Bench team was saying that every hospital trust was going to be privatised after the next election, and here is a hospital trust in the national health service performing as my hon. Friend has just set out. He is right about the Opposition's plans on the health service. They are now sharpening up a threat to the health service, not least by abolishing fundholding, which covers more than 40 per cent. of general practitioner patients up and down the country.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Hear, hear.

The Prime Minister: "Hear, hear," says the hon. Gentleman. What will he say to the patients of those fundholders when the extra facilities provided by fundholding are lost? He may say, "Hear, hear." He does not like it. He does not like the extra facilities. If he wishes to damage GP care, that is the way to do it, and that, he acknowledges, is his party's policy.

Mr. Sheldon: In the week of the funeral of Lord Wilson, will the Prime Minister consider one of the most important aspects of Lord Wilson's premiership: his concern about manufacturing production, after the decline of which he called for the need to reinstate Britain as the workshop of the world? In his period, levels of investment in manufacturing were very large and much greater than they have been in the years of this Administration. In the light of today's decline in the index of industrial production, will the Prime Minister start to accord to manufacturing industry investment the sort of priority that Lord Wilson had?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman will know, not only has there been in the past year or so a substantial improvement in the quantum of manufacturing and in manufacturing investment; there has also been, for the first time, I think, since before Lord Wilson became Prime Minister in 1964, a growth in the number of people with full-time jobs in manufacturing industry. When one considers our export figures and breaks them down, one sees the extent to which manufacturing industry—the management and work force in manufacturing industry—have begun to improve and sell their product with greater skill, both at home and abroad, so I share the right hon. Gentleman's aspirations for manufacturing and I believe that they are coming about.

Q3. **Mr. Wilkinson:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 June. [25845]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wilkinson: Has my right hon. Friend had time today to study the recently renegotiated Anglo-United States air services agreement? In that regard, can he confirm that he will use the national veto if necessary on any attempt by the European Union to usurp our country's right to negotiate with other countries both the destinations for British airlines and the frequency of

services, because the EU has shown itself to be manifestly incompetent in curbing the gross subsidies to state carriers on the part of some of our continental partners?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that has always been negotiated as a national matter and we believe that that is the right way to deal with it. Our concern is to secure the maximum benefits for United Kingdom passengers through increased choice and lower prices. We believe that negotiation by national Governments is the most appropriate way to achieve that. It is precisely in that way that we reached agreement this week with the United States on a further deal to liberalise our air services.

Mr. Hardy: The Prime Minister will be aware that, during the past few days, many of his colleagues have been trumpeting achievements on employment, suggesting that it is lower in Britain than in most other European countries. Does he accept that examination of the statistics shows that that is eyewash? Does he also accept that many jobs in Britain are filled by people who are paid wages that no one else in Europe would accept?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman on any of his propositions. Not only is our employment pretty much the lowest in Europe, with the exception of Holland among the larger nations, on any basis that one cares to calculate, but the number of people in employment is growing. For example, if I look at the constituencies of hon. Members whose names are down to ask questions today I see that, from the peak, unemployment in Warwickshire, North is down 40 per cent. *[Interruption.]* I promise that the hon. Gentleman is not asking a planted question. Unemployment in Southampton, Itchen is down 25 per cent. and it is down 30 per cent. in Denton and Reddish and 24 per cent. in Sedgefield.

Q4. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 June. [25846]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Labour councillors in Mid Glamorgan recently gave themselves an allowance increase of 388 per cent.? Does he agree that that is an incredibly selfish and greedy example of how Labour councils work? They whinge about other people's pay increases but, given the first opportunity, they have their snouts firmly in the trough, they put themselves first and stuff everyone they are supposed to represent.

The Prime Minister: I did indeed see those reports in the morning press and I would say to those councils and others that they also have a duty to remember that they are spending local taxpayers' money. If that is an example of new Labour in action, it seems to have no advantages whatsoever over old Labour.

Q5. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 8 June. [25847]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. O'Brien: The House of Commons Library has told me that, since 1979, unemployment is up more than 100 per cent. in north Warwickshire. If the Prime Minister and his Government come forward with pre-election tax cuts, will those not be bought at the price of underfunding schools and the police? In my county of Warwickshire, we are losing 172 teachers and more than 50 police officers. Are not undermining the police and damaging the educational opportunities of children in Warwickshire too high a price to pay for this Prime Minister who is seeking to save his political neck and that of this discredited Government?

The Prime Minister: I take it that that was—implicitly—a condemnation of the 388 per cent. increase in Labour councillors' allowances in Mid Glamorgan.

Mr. Prescott: What about the Warwickshire 100 per cent. unemployment?

The Prime Minister: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, if the deputy leader of the Labour party would care to stop shouting—*[Interruption.]* The Labour party cannot have it both ways. Labour Members cannot criticise us week after week after week over alleged tax increases and then say that they would oppose tax reductions as well. They had better make up their mind whether they are in favour of high tax, low tax, no tax, or just taking every opportunity that they can on any issue to say whatever happens to be appropriate on the day for a cheap, short-term headline.

As for education and other matters, the hon. Member for Warwickshire, North (Mr. O'Brien) will have seen right the way through the period in office of this Government an increase in resources spent on the health service—a dramatic increase in the health service, another £1.3 billion this year, a huge increase in 1979 in real terms over and above inflation year after year after year after year. In education, it does not matter whether one looks at primary, secondary or further education. That is why in 1979 one in eight of our young adults were getting into university and these days it is pretty nearly one in three as a result of the changes that we have made and the increased resources that we have made available.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): May I ask the Leader of the House for details of future business?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 12 JUNE—Motion on the Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order.

Remaining stages of the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill.

TUESDAY 13 JUNE—Opposition Day (13th allotted day). There will be a debate entitled "Insecurity in the Housing Market" on an Opposition motion.

WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE—Until 2.30 pm there will be debates on the motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Motion on the Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order.

THURSDAY 15 JUNE—Until 7 o'clock, motion on the Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order.

FRIDAY 16 JUNE—The House will not be sitting.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committees will meet at 10.30 am to consider European Community documents.

In the following week, I propose to provide for a further Opposition day on Monday 19 June. On Tuesday 20 June, I expect to take the Second Reading of the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill *[Lords]*, followed by remaining stages of the Town and Country Planning (Costs of Inquiries etc.) Bill. I anticipate taking Government business on Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 June. Friday 23 June is a non-sitting day.

[Tuesday 13 June:

European Standing Committee A—Relevant European Community documents: unnumbered, Fisheries: Integration of Spain and Portugal into the Common Fisheries Policy; Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports HC 70-xvii (1994-95).

Wednesday 14 June:

European Standing Committee B—Relevant European Community documents: unnumbered, Broad Economic Guidelines; Relevant European Legislation Committee Reports HC 70-xviii (1994-95).]

Mrs. Taylor: I thank the Leader of the House for that information and in particular for the fact that he has been able to give us more information with regard to the second week than on some occasions.

With reference to the new Select Committee that was established this week to implement the Nolan committee recommendations, will the Leader of the House confirm that he will do all in his power to ensure that that Committee gets under way as quickly as possible and is able to meet as frequently as is necessary to meet the Nolan timetable?

The right hon. Gentleman will recall that I have been pressing him for information about when we can expect economic debates in Government time, not least so that we may discuss what the *Financial Times* calls the "economic slow-down". Can he give us any further information today about the progress that he is making in terms of fitting in those debates, which the House will be anxious to have?

In view of the widespread public concern about the huge private profits from the running of the national lottery, will the Leader of the House arrange for an early debate on the matter, not least so that we can also discuss the impact of the lottery on charities, particularly medical charities?

Will the Leader of the House also respond to the need to debate another issue of significant public concern, which was highlighted in the report on the private security industry by the Select Committee on Home Affairs, as there are now more private security employees than serving police officers and as not one witness before the Select Committee was opposed to statutory regulation of the industry? Surely we now need from the Government not a White Paper, but early action.

If the Government do not intend to take early action, will the Leader of the House at least arrange a debate so that Parliament can prove that it is willing to tackle the problems created by the elements of the industry that appear to act as institutionalised protection racketeers? Will the Government give an assurance that they will stop obstructing or delaying the measures that the Select Committee recommended and which, clearly, the majority of hon. Members want to see put into place?

Mr. Newton: On the last point, the Government have, as the hon. Lady knows, welcomed the helpful recommendations in the report by the Home Affairs Select Committee. Clearly, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will seek to respond as soon as possible. I am not, however, in a position to say this afternoon exactly when and in what form that response will come.

I have two points to make about the lottery, while bearing the hon. Lady's request, as ever, much in mind. First, Camelot's bid to operate the lottery entailed a lower share of turnover for operating costs and profit than that of any other applicant for the licence. Secondly, part of the background to what the hon. Lady has said is that Camelot has made an astonishing success of the lottery, to the benefit of all the many good causes that will gain from it.

Proceeding in reverse order with the hon. Lady's questions, I now refer to her request for economic debates before the summer recess. I am afraid to say that I am still not in a position to give definite dates, but I continue to be aware of and intend to fulfil the Government's undertakings on the matter. I shall give the hon. Lady further information as soon as I can.

I think that everything I have said and done already shows my wish that the Select Committee dealing with the Nolan recommendations should proceed with all appropriate speed when its membership has been appointed.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: A number of hon. Members are standing. It may not be possible to call them all unless they put brisk questions. I ask for one question only, please, from now on and I am sure that the Leader of the House will give a brisk reply.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Can my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on Short money—the money paid to the official Opposition? Why

should taxpayers' money be used to flout equal opportunities legislation by means of women-only parliamentary candidate lists?

Mr. Newton: That is a very good question. I am tempted to invite the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) to reply. No doubt she will bear my hon. Friend's question in mind.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Leader of the House helpfully gave us as much information as possible about the week after next as well as next week; that is a helpful development. Does he appreciate that with the publication of the Donaldson report, "Safer Ships: Cleaner Seas", and the Government's response to it, there was considerable interest and concern on both sides of the House about marine safety? Will he now implement the promise of the former Secretary of State for Transport, when he brought the Donaldson report to the House, that we could debate the issue?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly bear that request in mind, especially as I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for the first part of his remarks. I regard it as my business always to be helpful.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): Will my right hon. Friend look shortly to arranging a debate so that we can discuss the parliamentary year? Is he aware that it is absurd that, within the space of three weeks in November, we have 10 days' open debate, but that we then do not get a chance for Government-sponsored debates on many items of good news throughout the rest of the year? Rather than conceding always to Opposition Supply days, will he consider giving us some Government Supply days as well?

Mr. Newton: That is another very good suggestion, which I shall bear in mind. My hon. Friend may be aware that I was giving evidence to the Procedure Committee on some related matters yesterday.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): Can the Leader of the House find time for an early debate on Britain's relationship with and future in the International Labour Organisation? He will be aware that this week there has been open warfare between the Foreign Office seeking to safeguard our integrity as an ILO member and the Employment Secretary and his Gayfere street epigone, who are acting to try to pull us out of the ILO. That is causing a great deal of cross-party concern, as is shown by early-day motion 1199.

[*That this House, having regard to the role the United Kingdom played in founding the International Labour Organisation in 1919 and considering the ILO's long history of resisting totalitarian and authoritarian governments by advancing on a tri-partite and evolving basis measures to promote employment and social justice, welcomes the continuing contribution that British ministers, employers and trade unions make to the ILO's work; and would consider any threat to continuing British participation at the ILO to be in breach of the United Kingdom's treaty obligations and to the need for continuing dialogue at the global level on the issues currently on the ILO agenda.*]

Many hon. Members would like a debate to affirm Britain's continuing commitment to membership of the ILO, which we helped to found.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has been misled. My right hon. Friends are in entire agreement that it is right that our membership of the ILO should be carefully evaluated, but no decision has been taken to withdraw.

Mr. Bob Dunn (Dartford): Will the Leader of the House allow us an urgent early debate on the means by which we can bring to account the leadership of the London borough of Islington for the appalling events that have taken place in that Labour-controlled authority's social services department recently?

Mr. Newton: I can assure my hon. Friend that I shall give careful consideration to the possibility of such a debate, during which that and other comparable matters could be raised.

Ms Margaret Hodge (Barking): In view of the fact that the Prime Minister was unable to tell the House of the additional cost caused to people by having to take out insurance for their mortgages, the reports in today's press of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux expressing concern and the statement by the chief executive of the Nationwide building society, will the Leader of the House make time for a debate on the insurance that individuals will have to take out to protect their mortgages?

Mr. Newton: I would observe that there is a debate on housing on an Opposition day next Tuesday, but I would also express surprise at the hon. Lady's nerve. On my hearing of the exchanges at Prime Minister's Question Time, by the time that it had finished, it was 40-love to my right hon. Friend and if a fourth question had been asked, it would have been game, set and match.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): May I ask my right hon. Friend for a debate on local government in London? Is he aware that, apart from the scandals of Islington, we are told that there is corruption and racism in Hackney and that in Lambeth there is £70 million of uncollected rates, council tax and community charge at a time when that council says that it cannot afford decent services?

Mr. Newton: My answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) applies also to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall).

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate in Government time next week on the total chaos of railway privatisation, which, in spite of the violent efforts of the present Government, will obviously be absolutely unworkable?

Mr. Newton: Were I to believe that the hon. Lady's suggestions were founded, I might well consider a debate, but I do not, so I shall not.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on the state of the performing arts in Britain? Does he agree that such a debate would enable us to raise our continuing concerns about the discretionary grant regime for students of dance and drama and to pay tribute to one British genius, Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, whose musicals bring pleasures to millions and massive revenues to the United Kingdom and who only this week won seven Tony awards in the United States for "Sunset Boulevard"?

Mr. Newton: I am happy to join in paying tribute to Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber and will bear in mind that request for a debate.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Can we be assured that the Select Committee that is considering the Nolan recommendations will seriously consider meeting and deliberating in public, in the same way as a Standing Committee of the House on legislation or regulatory matters does? It has always been the precedent in respect of privileges and Members' interests that it was necessary to meet in private only when the affairs of individual Members were being discussed, with a view to protecting that Member prior to the Committee finding. Can we have an assurance that that has not been ruled out, because my view is that the wider British public would like to hear the discussions that take place in the Committee?

Mr. Newton: As you will know, Madam Speaker, even if the hon. Gentleman does not, Select Committees have been given no power by the House to deliberate in public. The hon. Gentleman might like to bear in mind the fact that, although the Nolan committee took evidence in public, it certainly did not deliberate in public. Had it done so, I doubt that we would ever have seen a report at all.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May I ask my right hon. Friend for a debate next week on the costs of doctors in parallel practices—it seems that doctor A can spend three times as much as doctor B on a similar number of patients but with less effect—with a view to establishing the effectiveness of fundholding in extending services to patients at a sound cost?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend's question reveals one of the advantages of the new arrangements, in that they enable such questions to be raised. However, I cannot promise an immediate debate.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Leader of the House ensure that the new Committee on Nolan's recommendations produces a report to be debated before the summer recess? Will he use his best offices to ensure that the report deals with the merits and demerits of proceeding by way of legislation rather than resolution of the House? Finally, will he use his very best offices to ensure that that Committee, unlike many of its predecessors, is not stuffed full of Conservatives with vested interests up to their eyeballs?

Mr. Newton: As the membership of the Committee has not yet been established, although its terms of reference have been agreed by the House, it would clearly be wrong and absurd for me to attempt to say this afternoon what the Committee will or will not do at any particular point in time.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Does my right hon. Friend agree that we must have a debate on social services in Islington? I stress the issue because I wonder whether he has read the appalling report about the children in Islington's care who have been subjected to gross sexual abuse. The leader of the council at the time and who was responsible is now the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge). Does my right hon. Friend agree that she should apologise to the House and explain what went wrong?

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend will have heard, I have already said twice that I am sympathetic to the possibility of a debate in which such matters might be raised.

Mrs. Helen Liddell (Monklands, East): I should be grateful if the Leader of the House gave early consideration to a debate on today's announcement about the massive pay increase for the Director General of Gas Supply, Clare Spottiswoode. A number of hon. Members have already been approached by constituents who feel that it is a public affront. Could we have an early opportunity to articulate those matters in the House?

Mr. Newton: I note the hon. Lady's request, but point out that my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade is due to be answering questions next Wednesday.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on what is going on in the Select Committee on Members' Interests, because it seems that some Opposition Members are failing to attend and do their duty, failing to consider the complaints made against the Leader of the Opposition and the deputy Leader of the Opposition and are acting on behalf of a newspaper in pursuing a libel action? A newspaper libelled an hon. Member, but Opposition Members seem to be supporting the newspaper in what should be a matter for the courts in due course. Does not my right hon. Friend consider that the statements by the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) in the press today are incorrect and should be condemned?

Mr. Newton: Any attempt to prevent Select Committees from undertaking proper inquiries that they have been asked to undertake or to go outside the proceedings of those Committees is something that I am sure the House wishes not to happen. Beyond that, I do not think that I am in a position to comment on what my hon. Friend said.

Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey): Will the Leader of the House give us time to debate those matters next week? The Committee is in a state of deadlock. The Labour members of that Committee have tried hard for five months to get it to look after its procedures, take account of precedent and do its duty, but have been stymied at every turn by the presence of a Government Whip, which has made it impossible for us to do our duty. In the end, we felt that we had to come out because we could not be party to a Conservative stitch-up on one of the most important issues facing the House this Session.

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady has in fact confirmed what my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said, which was that she is blocking the work of a properly constituted Committee of the House.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): My right hon. Friend will probably share my concern at the fact that more and more decisions affecting the lives of our fellow countrymen are made under treaty and royal prerogative. We should not be careless in considering those matters. Will he therefore undertake to give the House an opportunity to debate the progress made by the reflections group as it progresses towards the intergovernmental conference next year? It is important that we are given an opportunity to monitor that progress and to debate matters as they arise. We should do our level best to remove from

people the frustration that they undoubtedly feel as a result of so many decisions being made by treaty rather than as a result of a vote in the House.

Mr. Newton: I would certainly anticipate that the House and Parliament will have a number of opportunities for relevant discussions on the matter. Meanwhile, my hon. Friend will be aware that the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, my hon. Friend the Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis), gave evidence to the Select Committee on European Legislation this morning on one of the meetings earlier this week.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): At long last, the Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill has come out of Committee, despite considerable attempts by the Government—on a duly constituted Committee of the House—to stop the progress of the Bill. Will the Leader of the House provide an opportunity for Report and the remaining stages of the Bill—which is supported widely in the country, progressed to Committee following a 175 to nil vote in the House and has supporters from all political parties—to be considered, so that the Bill can progress to another place?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman has—not unreasonably—asked me almost exactly the same question on innumerable occasions. I am not in a position to add to what I said earlier.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate on the amusement industry, which employs hundreds of people in my constituency and thousands throughout the country? Does he agree that such a debate would provide an opportunity for Labour Members to explain their curious policies towards the industry? Those policies were recently brought to my attention in a copy of a letter sent to the British Amusement Catering Trades Association—the trade association of the coin-operated amusement machine industry—by a senior Labour Member, former Cabinet Minister and adviser to the present Labour leader. The letter says:

"I myself regard amusement arcades as wholly undesirable and nothing would give me more pleasure than for them to be taxed out of existence."

Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an extraordinary statement, and should not the House be told whether it properly reflects Labour policy?

Mr. Newton: I can imagine that the statement would not be greeted with enthusiasm in the town that my hon. Friend represents. While I cannot promise a debate on the matter, it seems like a splendid subject for a Wednesday morning.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): May we have a statement next week on the Government's attitude to the Scott inquiry, in view of the fact that not only has the inquiry itself been criticised by the Government and their supporters—if not too publicly—but the distinguished judge himself? The Government and their supporters are concerned about scandals for which the House has no responsibility. Why do not the Government concentrate on scandals for which they are responsible, such as selling arms to Iraq prior to the Gulf war? Why are they attacking the Scott inquiry and the judge?

Mr. Newton: The matter was raised with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on Tuesday. I thought that his answers were entirely straightforward and clear-cut, and I do not intend to add to them.

Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere): May I support the request by my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) for a debate on the Select Committee on Members' Interests? What redress is available to members of that Committee when a newspaper—aided and abetted by a member of the Committee—makes a series of misrepresentations about the Committee, including that one member of the Committee was appointed to intervene in an inquiry, when in fact the member had been appointed long before the complaint was made and the inquiry begun?

The newspaper also stated that the Committee was not investigating one of the two allegations that was before it when it is doing so. Has not the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) attempted to discredit the Select Committee in conjunction with a newspaper that is itself a party to a libel action? Furthermore, given that, throughout its deliberations, the Committee's detailed proceedings have appeared in that newspaper bearing the interpretation that the hon. Member for Wallasey put on them, it is important that the House knows what the relationship is in that case. May we have a debate on it?

Mr. Newton: As my hon. Friend will have heard, the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) has already confirmed that she, as it were, seeks to frustrate the work of the Committee. Perhaps she would care to confirm the rest of my hon. Friend's interpretation.

Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford, South): The Leader of the House will be aware of the case of my constituent, Private Lee Clegg; his case was reviewed by the Northern Ireland Life Sentence Review Board on Monday. Will he ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to make a statement to the House on the recommendations of the Life Sentence Review Board to prevent any more anguish to Private Lee Clegg or his family, and to meet the great interest that the British public have shown in that case?

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly bring that request to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. John Wilkinson (Ruislip-Northwood): Looking at the next fortnight's business, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he has left enough flexibility in the programme to allow for occasional statements, as they may be required, by Her Majesty's Government on the evolving situation in Bosnia? During the Falklands war, for example, either the Defence Secretary or the Foreign Secretary regularly came to the House to reassure hon. Members and, through them, the public at large. It will be necessary to inform hon. Members and to clarify the Government's policy, especially given that British lives are involved.

Mr. Newton: I cannot say that I have planned the business with a view to allowing for such statements, but the record will show that I have made provision for them whenever it has seemed to those of us at the Dispatch Box that they were required. I note my hon. Friend's concern.

Mrs. Helen Jackson (Sheffield, Hillsborough): In view of the record 44 per cent. increase in Northumbrian Water's profits, which was announced today, and the fact

[Mrs. Helen Jackson]

that it is the fifth water company to announce record increases in its profits one year after the price review that was supposed to keep prices for customers down, will the Leader of the House provide Government time for a debate on the total failure to offer customers value for money of last year's price review of the water and sewerage industry?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Lady might like to note that, over the next five years, the industry will share £90 million of the benefits of efficiency savings with its customers, which means £32.50 for each of its nearly 3 million customers.

Mr. Alan Duncan (Rutland and Melton): Will my right hon. Friend consider having a debate on Britain's membership of the International Labour Organisation? Although that organisation has a budget of £177 million, of which Britain contributes £8 million, its only achievement seems to be that it is an international quango that allows trade unionists to go on freebies at the taxpayer's expense and is supported by the Labour party. Is it not high time that we withdrew from that organisation and the House had a chance to debate it?

Mr. Newton: I have already told the House that my right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary and the Employment Secretary agree that our membership of the ILO should be carefully evaluated. They will no doubt take account of points such as those raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Following the public humiliation that the Government's rail privatisation suffered in the Court of Appeal in Scotland this week when they sought to circumvent section 27 of the Railways Act 1993, will the Leader of the House arrange for a debate on the chaos that has ensued from the Government's proposals with regard to the Fort William sleeper and other rail privatisation proposals?

Mr. Newton: The subject of that court action was not a privatised body but British Rail.

Mr. Bernard Jenkin (Colchester, North): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a debate not on the Select Committee on Members' Interests but on whether we should establish another Committee of Privileges to look into the activities of some members of the Members' Interests Committee? Is it not a breach of privilege to divulge papers—

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is alleging breach of privilege, which is a most serious accusation. As he knows, he must write to me if he wishes to allege any breach of privilege whatever by any Member of this House. He should now think about it carefully and rephrase his question or write to me.

Mr. Jenkin: May I ask my right hon. Friend to provide time for a debate, to discover whether we can establish a Committee to investigate those matters?

Mr. Newton: As you will know, Madam Speaker, you have already referred a number of matters to the Committee of Privileges, of which I have the privilege of being the Chairman. Were you to ask us to do something else, no doubt we would.

Mr. Don Touhig (Islwyn): There are fresh signs that the United Kingdom economy may follow the United States economy in slowing down. The Central Statistical Office forecasts show a fall for the 10th month in a row, which suggests that the economy may be faltering—

Mr. David Shaw: We can read.

Mr. Touhig: Fine; I will read.

Hon. Members: Reading.

Madam Speaker: Order. Let me give a little guidance to the hon. Gentleman. The purpose of business questions is to ask the Leader of the House for a debate. One begins by saying that, then one has two lines on why one needs that debate.

Mr. Shaw: One line.

Madam Speaker: One line, or not more than two lines.

Mr. Touhig: I appreciate your guidance, Madam Speaker. Thank you very much. There are further signs that house building is decreasing again, compared with the previous quarter. Does the Leader of the House recognise—*[Interruption.]* I am coming to the end. Does the Leader of the House recognise that his answer to my hon. Friend the shadow Leader of the House—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman has understood. If a debate is sought next week, the Member begins by asking for a debate next week because of a particular situation, and thereafter paraphrases what the problem is and why the debate must take place. He is not in an argument with the Leader of the House. He is asking the Leader of the House for a debate.

Mr. Touhig: I appreciate your guidance, Madam Speaker. I shall certainly learn from your guiding hand. My point is that the Leader of the House should urgently arrange a debate on the economy so that the House—

Madam Speaker: Well done.

Mr. Touhig: I would have got there in the end, Madam Speaker. The right hon. Gentleman should arrange that so that the House may debate the appalling mess that the economy is in as a result of the Government's actions.

Mr. Newton: I think that the hon. Gentleman was trying to pick an argument with the Leader of the House, and he very nearly succeeded, except that I can draw attention to the fact that I have already provided, at the request of Her Majesty's Opposition, for a debate about housing next Tuesday.

Mr. Ian Bruce (South Dorset): May we have a debate next week about the problems of paedophiles travelling overseas and committing offences against children in other countries? Will we be able to give time to the Bill that is currently in the House of Lords and consider the possibility of prosecuting people? My right hon. Friend will know that the all-party street children group is preparing reports on those matters, and that there is serious worry about such matters internationally.

Mr. Newton: I am of course aware of those reports, and I am sure that they will be carefully considered, as will what my hon. Friend has said, by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Points of Order

4.2 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, during Question Time, the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), was asked about the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the International Labour Organisation. In response, he said that, on the previous, day answers had been given to questions tabled by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) on precisely that matter. He commended those replies, which, he said

"make the position and the commitment of the United Kingdom Government quite clear."—[*Official Report*, 7 June 1995; Vol. 261, c. 210.]

In fact, those questions did not appear in *Hansard* until today. In columns *94* and *95* there is a series of questions about the ILO, but not one of them mentions Britain's continued membership.

We know that there is a split between the Department of Employment and the Foreign Office on that matter, and I understand that it may well be that the Minister of State had been given draft replies that were not eventually printed in *Hansard*. Nevertheless, the position is that the House has been misled about that matter. The House does not know where matters stand with respect to withdrawal or otherwise from the ILO.

Is it in your power now, Madam Speaker, to ask that the Minister of State come to the House to answer a direct question and to clarify the position, so that no longer will the House have been misled in that way?

Madam Speaker: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that the House has been misled deliberately; perhaps there has been some misunderstanding. I do not have the questions in front of me, so I cannot comment upon them in any detail—nor would I do so across the Floor of the House. The Government have not told me that they are seeking to make a statement about the matter. However, judging from what the hon. Gentleman has said, it seems that it should be cleared up, Hon. Members on the Treasury Bench have heard this exchange and I hope that they will clear up the matter at the earliest opportunity so that we may all understand the position.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. During business questions a number of hon. Members heard the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) accuse my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) of disclosing evidence and other business that had been before the Select Committee on Members' Interests. That is clearly a very serious accusation, with which the Leader of the House adroitly avoided associating himself directly—although he said that my hon. Friend's earlier comments tended to reinforce the accusation made by the hon. Member for Hertsmere. In those circumstances, I ask you to invite the hon. Member for Hertsmere to withdraw his accusation. That would be warmly welcomed not only by my hon. Friend but by all hon. Members.

Madam Speaker: I have no authority in those matters, but I remind all hon. Members—particularly those who are present in the Chamber—that we enjoy a great deal of privilege as to what we are able to say in this place. However, that privilege must be matched by responsibility. A number of hon. Members accept the privileges that they are afforded on these green Benches, but they do not accept the responsibility that goes with that. I hope that I will hear no more about these matters now.

Ms Margaret Hodge (Barking): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I seek your guidance and clarification about a number of matters—

Madam Speaker: Order. Is it a point of order? It cannot be a matter of argument.

Ms Hodge *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady will resume her seat. She is not so accustomed to our procedures in this place. My door is always open to hon. Members who seek my guidance about matters so that they may follow the correct procedures. If the hon. Lady wishes to raise a point of order that I can deal with immediately from the Chair, I shall do so. If she is seeking my guidance about several matters, she must come to see me.

Ms Hodge: It is a point of order, Madam Speaker. Unlike the hon. Member for Sutton and Cheam (Lady Olga Maitland), I have informed her of my intention to raise this matter. The hon. Lady failed to give me notice of the matter that she raised previously and I seek your clarification, Madam Speaker, as to whether I shall have an opportunity to make a statement in the House, so that I may correct some of the gross inaccuracies voiced by Conservative Members. Is there a mechanism by which I can protect myself from the misleading and erroneous accusations made by Conservative Members?

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. I will have no more points of order on this; I am dealing with the matter raised by the hon. Member for Barking (Ms Hodge). The hon. Lady, whether or not she was in the Chamber, should have been informed if her name was to be used in the House. So far as a personal statement is concerned, if the hon. Lady comes to see me, I shall do my best to advise her so that she may protect her own interests in these matters.

Mr. Shaw: Further to that point of order, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Order. There will be no further points of order on the subject once I have dealt with the point of order. It must be a different point of order.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. You will have heard the Leader of the House say that Select Committees of the House of Commons cannot deliberate in public. Will you clarify that my interpretation of the rules is correct and that his is wrong? I believe that a Select Committee can decide itself whether it wishes to deliberate in public.

Madam Speaker: Let me be absolutely precise: it is the practice for Select Committees to deliberate in private. However, that is not laid down in any of the Standing Orders of the House. We shall now proceed to today's business.

Select Committee Papers (Disclosure)

Madam Speaker: Before I call a signatory to the motion to move it, I must make an important statement about the scope and the character of the debate. The motion is closely connected to a criminal trial that is now before the courts. As a result, anything beyond the most incidental references to the substance of the charges will not be permitted. The defendants are standing trial in the Central Criminal court. The Chair will be rigorous in ensuring that they are not also tried in the House.

Debate must be restricted to the advisability or otherwise of making certain documents available to the trial judge, as the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) requests in his motion.

We in the House expect the courts to respect the proper role of Parliament. We, in turn, should respect their proper role and I look to all right hon. and hon. Members contributing to the debate to pay scrupulous heed to that principle.

4.9 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson (Wantage): I beg to move,

That this House orders that certain evidence and related material of the Select Committee on Social Security in the present and in the previous Parliament which has not been reported to the House and not been published shall be produced to the honourable Mr. Justice Phillips at the Central Criminal Court in connection with the proceedings against Mr. Kevin Francis Herbert Maxwell and others on charges relating to conspiracy to defraud: viz. (1) records and transcripts of any evidence given and recorded orally in private session of those Committees in the course of their investigations into the operation of pension fund law, and into the affairs of pension funds connected with companies associated with the late Robert Maxwell MC, (2) any documents produced in such private session of those Committees, (3) correspondence between the Serious Fraud Office and those Committees or the Chairman or any person acting on behalf of those Committees and (4) such notes of any meetings including telephone calls between the Serious Fraud Office and those Committees arising from, or connected with, Committee investigations into the operation of the pension funds referred to in 1992 and 1993 that may have been taken; so that he may decide if all or part of the evidence should under normal common law principles be disclosed to the parties in the trial and, if he so decides, the Court shall be permitted to make such reference as if that evidence and related material or any part thereof were included within the terms of the Resolution of this House of 31st October 1980 (References in Court to Official Report of Debates and Reports of Committees).

I am most grateful to the House, and in particular to my hon. Friend the Treasurer of Her Majesty's Household for making the debate possible. I intend to speak only briefly, but the brevity of my speech will not be commensurate with the importance of the issues that are raised by the resolution that I am proposing and by the petition that lies behind it, which I presented to the House a month ago.

As you have just pointed out, Madam Speaker, the Maxwell trial is now taking place. Mr. Kevin Maxwell, one of the Maxwell brothers, is a constituent of mine. When he came to see me about the matter we are about to debate, I concluded that it was my duty to assist him because I am his Member of Parliament and because he puts to me and to Parliament a question which merits a considered and reasoned answer.

The issue is as follows: it is a clear principle of common law that the prosecution must disclose to the defence all documents which might conceivably be helpful to it. That obligation has been found by the courts, in the words of the most recent case—Regina *v.* Judith Ward 1992—to extend to all those associated with the prosecution. According to the judgment in that case, that duty falls upon all those who form part of

"the total apparatus of the State".

So we have on one side a principle of common law. It is an important principle because it bears on the question of the subject's entitlement to a fair trial, which is one of the fundamental duties of the state and all who form part of the state to secure.

On the other hand, however, we have the principle of parliamentary privilege. The precise point of privilege at issue in this matter is expressed in article 9 of the Bill of Rights 1689, one of the fundamental charters of our system of parliamentary government. The article declares

"that the freedom of speech and debate or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place outside of Parliament"

I do not know whether the framers of the Bill of Rights could have had it in mind in that article that evidence bearing on a criminal trial given in camera to a Select Committee should not be made available, in conformity with common law, to the defence.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My hon. Friend will know that I am a member of the Select Committee. He will appreciate that one is limited in what one can say and that one may not make all the points that one would like, since the trial is taking place. Why are we now, in June 1995, asking about the release of documents and papers that were before the Select Committee in 1993? Surely they could have been dealt with in 1994 and should have been dealt with well before the trial started, so that we would not be limited in what we can say in Parliament.

Mr. Jackson: I have not made it my business to inquire into the long and complicated back story that lies behind Kevin Maxwell's approach to me, but I understand there was a long period of discussion and negotiation between the Maxwell lawyers and those connected with the Select Committee concerning the matter. That may well be the answer to my hon. Friend.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is there not a far more important issue? If witnesses to a Select Committee for one moment believe that it is remotely possible that papers that they hand to that Select Committee may, at some remote stage in future, be handed over to a judge in a court, might it not inhibit them when they submit their original evidence? If we followed the hon. Gentleman's route, might it not have an effect on the ability of witnesses to speak freely in private before Select Committees or to submit evidence on the basis that it remained confidential to the Committees?

Mr. Jackson: The hon. Gentleman appears to be making his contribution to the debate; I hope that he will speak at greater length later. My function at this stage is to put the resolution before the House and to explain why I am doing so. The hon. Gentleman's point is perfectly fair—it is one for the House to consider. Meanwhile I am simply trying to put the issue before the House so that it can consider it.

There is a conflict between what common law holds about disclosure of documents to the defence and what the Bill of Rights holds in respect of parliamentary privilege. I understand that the article that I have quoted

from the Bill of Rights has been the subject of strict interpretation by the courts in modern times—to such an extent that the courts will not order a party to hand over documents relating to parliamentary proceedings.

This, therefore, is how I see the issue. On the one hand there is common law, and the right of defendants to a fair trial. On the other hand, there is the privilege of Parliament, a body which certainly forms part of the total apparatus of the state, upon which the most recent case reaffirms the duty of disclosure to the defence.

Is there a way through the dilemma? Mr. Kevin Maxwell's petition, to which my resolution seeks to give effect, indicates such a path. It respectfully asks the House to waive its parliamentary privilege in this matter on this occasion. I should add that the resolution suggests that the documents be disclosed to the judge, not to the defence directly. That is intended as a courtesy to Parliament.

I do not know what transpired in the private sessions of the Social Security Select Committee in relation to its work on the Maxwell pensions affair; nor do the Maxwell brothers and their lawyers. All that is on the public record is the fact that Neil Cooper, the liquidator of Bishopsgate Investment Management Ltd., the main Maxwell pension company, had a private session with the Committee on 27 October 1992. That is known, because the Chairman of the Committee, the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), has referred to it in open session. But I have not considered it my business to inquire into the proceedings of the Select Committee or into the motives of my constituent and his brother for seeking access to this material. It seems to me that such questions are irrelevant to the issue that my resolution puts before the House.

There is at the moment an important inquiry proceeding under the presidency of Lord Justice Scott in relation to the Matrix Churchill affair. I put it to the House that there is an analogy between our position today and the position of the Ministers into whose conduct in relation to Matrix Churchill Lord Justice Scott is inquiring. When those Ministers were asked to sign public interest immunity certificates, the issue before them concerned the privilege of the Executive and its protection in relation to the obligation to disclose documents to the defence. Today we are being asked whether we wish to sign a sort of parliamentary public immunity certificate, in order to protect parliamentary privilege in an exactly analogous case.

It was, I believe, a difficult and weighty decision for my right hon. Friends, the Ministers whose decisions are now being inquired into. It is a weighty and difficult decision for us today. In both cases the public are entitled to expect that reasoned consideration will be given to the issues. I would add that the public would expect us, in our deliberations, to give great weight to the interest of the subject in making good his entitlement to a fair trial.

The onus probandi must lie with those who wish to secure the protection of privilege over against the natural and common law entitlement of a defendant in a criminal trial to have sight of material that may be relevant to his defence.

4.18 pm

Mr. Frank Field (Birkenhead): I am slightly puzzled by the speech of the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson). I thought that, as well as telling us what the petition states, which we can read in the Order Paper, he would present arguments on why we should put aside our privilege to make certain information available. The only argument that he advanced was one of analogy, saying that we are in similar position, as a Select Committee and a House, as Ministers are in the Matrix Churchill affair. Surely there is a real difference between the two situations.

When certificates were signed in the Matrix Churchill affair, Ministers had to consider whether innocent people might go to prison. The hon. Gentleman will understand when I have finished presenting a review of the evidence that was presented to a Select Committee that that Committee was never in such a position. In a sense, in not trying to persuade us by argument to set aside the privileges which we for particular reasons have been given, the hon. Gentleman makes my task somewhat easier.

As we are dealing with a dreadfully serious matter involving the rights and possible liberties of individuals and the role of the House in trying to protect the rights and privileges of people in general, the Select Committee on Social Security met to review how it had proceeded and the nature of the evidence that would be made available if the petition were granted. We, the Committee, went carefully through that evidence. I shall take the House through it in a moment. The whole Committee concluded that, while it could not know what the hon. Gentleman would say in an attempt to persuade the House to agree to his petition, unless he produced compelling arguments that our privileges should be put on one side, we should not agree to the petition.

There are four sets of evidence which the petition, cast as it is in the most general terms rather than specific, would cover. They are the transcripts of evidence given in private and not reported to the House, documents produced in those private evidence sessions and not reported to the House, correspondence between the Select Committee and the Serious Fraud Office and, lastly, notes of private meetings and telephone calls between representatives of the Committee and the SFO. As for that last set, no evidence remains. If notes were kept of telephone conversations, they were destroyed quickly afterwards. We are dealing with a substantial amount of evidence in three sets.

Over five sessions, the Select Committee took evidence from the following sources in private. Bar one, that was followed by public evidence. We did not go into public evidence after we had met the SFO.

On 23 September 1992, in private session, we spoke with Arthur Andersen and Co. and Allen and Overy. On 27 October, we met Robson Rhodes and Stephenson Harwood. On 28 January 1993, we met the SFO. On 27 April, we met Clay and Partners and three groups of people representing the different trustees of the various pension schemes. On 4 May, we met Robson Rhodes and Stephenson Harwood.

It is important for the House to know that practically all the evidence and conversations that we had were about the recovery of funds—in other words, how is it going, what is the global total so far recovered, how much effort has been put into recovery, how many hours, by whom and what has been the cost? If I could be certain of my memory, I would say that we discussed no other issues.

Mr. David Shaw: Could I confirm the hon. Gentleman's recollection that the primary purpose of our

[Mr. David Shaw]

discussions in private was to look after the interests of pensioners and to try to ensure that any actions that they may want to bring in their own civil court cases will not be harmed in any way, and that we were not interested in any matters that might have an impact on criminal charges? We wanted to ensure that the pensioners get a good outcome, and wanted also to do our duty to the House of Commons and complete a report on the operation of pension funds.

Mr. Field: That was a helpful intervention. I shall not respond to it now, because, for the first time ever speaking in the House, I actually have a brief, and I wish to keep to it because the matter is so important. The hon. Gentleman will realise, I hope, by the end of my contribution, that I more than underline the point that he has just made.

It is important for the House to know how the individuals and companies that came before the Committee feel in the circumstances, as we asked them to come and talk to us in private session. Again, I emphasise that it was not about criminal trials or anything of that kind, but about the recovery of funds, how those individuals and companies were going about their task, how quickly they thought that they would complete their task, and what the cost of that recovery would be. Indeed, one has only to go to the Library to see from the newspaper cuttings that that was how the public side of our proceedings were reported.

Let me outline how those individuals and companies would feel, should we wish to recommend to the House that we break our word that they could come and speak in confidence to us.

First, Arthur Andersen and Co. wrote to the Committee on 22 May this year and said that the evidence had been given in confidence for it contained comments on its strategy and approach to the Maxwell investigation and referred to potential litigation that the private group of companies was considering commencing. In other words, it was prepared to share with us how it was going to use the law against people whom it thought were wrongly holding assets that should be returned.

Mr. Talbot of Arthur Andersen and Co. went on to tell the Committee, and thereby the House:

"I would very much prefer for this evidence not to be placed in the public domain and in any event it does seem to me that agreement as to confidentiality of this nature should be respected."

Mr. Talbot added that, given the lapse in time, he would not lose a great deal of sleep if the evidence was now made public; although he obviously would have had a different view if it had been made public earlier.

Secondly, we had representatives from Robson Rhodes and Stephenson Harwood, referring to the liquidation of BIM—Bishopsgate Investment Management. A letter from Mr. John Fordham of Stephenson Harwood to our Committee, on 16 May 1995, makes it clear that the primary concern of witnesses was that

"nothing at all should be done that would prejudice recovery of assets and monies for the Maxwell pensioners."

The representative of Stephenson Harwood told the Committee that its clients

"do not consider that any of the material under consideration could be relevant to the"

criminal

"charges or the defence of them."

Stephenson Harwood goes on to raise the point that this is not merely about whether we should respect confidentiality but rather what would it mean to court-appointed officials and holders of office if we are prepared to break our word about confidentiality.

The third group of people who came before the Committee were representatives of trustees of the different Maxwell pension funds: those, in a sense, who were in the firing line—on the one hand wishing to see funds restored and on the other trying to reassure pensioners and potential pensioners that at the end of the day the funds would be there to continue to pay current pensions or future pensions.

All those groups of trustees have written expressing concern about the disclosure of any of the information that they gave to us about their concerns in private sessions. One goes on to suggest that a current issue is involved, in that we collected evidence in private from them about how they were responding to Sir John Cuckney's efforts to secure a global settlement to restore funds. The trustees emphasise that civil claims that they might or might not have made were discussed, and that, as part of the global settlement, they have put aside any future legal action for the recovery of funds. They now fear that an agreement that they considered themselves to have made—both in talking to us, and in the form of a bargain struck in private—could be undone.

The last organisation to come before the Committee, on 28 January 1993, was the Serious Fraud Office. We referred to the hearing in our second special report to the House during the 1992-93 Session. The special report stated that the Committee had received representations from the Serious Fraud Office, and that the witnesses who would be called to give evidence to the Committee would also be witnesses in the criminal proceedings. The Serious Fraud Office believed that the evidence of those witnesses before the Committee and in the criminal proceedings was likely to be the same.

In the light of what it had been told by the Serious Fraud Office, the Committee then reported to the House:

"we believe that it is right . . . not to examine any of the witnesses who are going to be called to give evidence in the impending criminal and civil proceedings. We are therefore postponing examination of witnesses who have given evidence to the Serious Fraud Office for that impending trials".

We discussed whether we should continue our inquiry in private, or whether the inquiry should cease. I remember the conversation vividly: it reminds me of John Henry Newman's remark about historians who endlessly debated the way in which someone wore a hat on a particular day, and what significance should be attached to the wearing of a hat at a certain angle.

My hon. Friend the Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) said that if we continued our inquiry into what had happened to the funds and their recovery, even if we did so in private, people whose business it was to make mischief would try to interpret what we had done in a certain way, and try to induce members of the Committee to hint at what our activities might have been; and all our proceedings would be misrepresented. With that in mind, we reported in our second special report in 1992 our belief that to adopt the private session approach

"would leave the inquiry open to rumour and speculation, some of it possibly deliberately contrived in order to suggest that the Committee was conducting itself in a way which could affect the legal proceedings."

We went on to report publicly to the House:

"The Committee has already taken note of publicity from other sources which it believes has been intended to influence those proceedings, favourably to the defendants."

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): All of us—at any rate, all Opposition Members—are on a free vote. Whether we support the motion, however, will depend on a question that will be very much in our minds: will refusing to release the papers in any way harm the defendants who now face criminal charges? Did not the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) have a responsibility to persuade us that they would be so harmed? In my view, he did not do so.

Unless we are virtually convinced that not releasing the papers would make the proceedings against the defendants unfair, we should not break a convention on which the House has agreed over many years.

Mr. Field: I am grateful for that intervention because it underscores my first point, which was that, when Committee members considered their collective approach—although, of course, how it behaves is up to the House—we did not know how the hon. Member for Wantage would introduce his motion and the new evidence that he might have to persuade us that our view was wrong. On the evidence that we had, however, we thought it wrong that the papers should be disclosed, and the hon. Gentleman has not produced evidence to persuade us—or at least me—to the contrary.

If one just read what is on the Order Paper and in the petition, one could be forgiven for thinking that the Select Committee, in going about its business, collected evidence that was not only relevant to the trial but could prevent a fair trial. I wish to emphasise that we ceased our inquiry. We could have continued, been pig-headed and stood on our rights, but we decided not to do any of those things because we did not wish the House to be put in the position in which it finds itself today.

In discussing the range and nature of the evidence that the Committee has taken in private, I hope that I have shown that it involved the recovery of funds and the cost of the recovery of funds; it was not mere speculation on who might have done what, when and how.

The House must consider the merits of the petition. Has a case been made that we should set aside the House's long-established privilege, not to make us important, but collectively to protect our constituents as we go about our duties—a privilege given to us under the Bill of Rights? On that count, we have not had a case put forward. Again, it is of course important for to us remember that the Select Committee in a sense tore up its inquiry and began other activities—important but lesser work than we might have undertaken had we not been mindful of the trial.

I conclude on a note of caution. There are two issues here. There is the immediate one—the trial that is taking place. Secondly, this might be the first of a series of such petitions before the House. People in court may increasingly ask us to put aside our privilege. I therefore hope that the House will decide not to grant or compel the Select Committee to give up the evidence. No case has yet been put forward for us to do so. We should be mindful of the fact that the House does not want to put itself in a position whereby, even to the slightest extent, as my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said, it could prevent a fair trial from taking place in other circumstances.

There may be an issue here for the Committee of Privileges to consider in the generality of things, not specifically tied to the petition. I hope that I have managed to give the House some idea of the range of meetings that the Committee had, which were in private, the evidence that we collected, and the people to whom we spoke. I hope that I have given a clear idea of how individuals will feel if the promise that we gave them in good faith—that their evidence was in confidence—has to be broken.

I hope that the House notes that, because Committee members in no way ever wished to be in the position in which they find themselves today, they ceased their original inquiry; we did not want in any way to collect evidence that was relevant to anyone's trial, should a trial take place in the future.

I hope that the House also notes that the petition raises a serious point about the liberties of individual subjects, which has to be matched against the liberties of all our constituents and that that may be an issue that the Select Committee on Procedure will want to study. Despite his noble attempts, however, I do not believe that the hon. Member for Wantage has persuaded me that we should break the confidence that we gave those people in the 1992 and 1993 Sessions and set aside that evidence, taken in private, and make it public.

4.39 pm

The Attorney-General (Sir Nicholas Lyell): I had wondered whether to wait until after my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) had addressed the House, but it may help if I make a short intervention at this stage.

Naturally, the House is anxious to protect the ability of its Select Committees to take evidence in private and to preserve that confidentiality, for the good reasons that the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), as Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Security, carefully and clearly expressed—reasons on which hon. Members on both sides of the House are likely to expand in this debate, including, in due course, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, as Chairman of the Select Committee on Liaison.

I have had some discussions with the hon. Member for Birkenhead and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing to consider how to approach this matter. The position is not easy for the House, because the issues raised are on the borderline between the role of the House and the role of the courts within our constitution. Traditionally, as Madam Speaker said before the debate, each has rightly remained very careful not to trespass on the role of the other and to exercise great care and discretion in finding the right solutions to problems that fall on the borderline between their respective roles.

The House is properly jealous of its privileges, but I doubt—this is already clear from interventions in the debate—that it would want to withhold from the courts material that, if it existed, might show that an accused person was innocent, or would be so likely to be relevant to the issues in a criminal trial that, in the interests of justice, it was necessary that it be disclosed.

I have given the matter much thought and had private consultations with others, the House authorities and my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House about how such difficult questions might be handled. The dilemma is in

[Sir Nicholas Lyell]

part that, while the House knows very well why the confidentiality of such material should be protected, it is conscious that its knowledge of the details of any court case will inevitably be limited and it is not, therefore, well placed to know how far particular evidence or documentation might be material to any trial.

Before the House accedes to such a petition as this, it can reasonably expect a substantial case as to the likely materiality of anything in its possession to be put forward on behalf of the petitioner—here, I am picking up on the argument that the hon. Member for Birkenhead has already advanced.

Mr. Robert Jackson: Since there seems to have been some criticism on that point, may I say that my purpose is to raise the issue and not to advocate any particular view of it? Indeed, it would be difficult to do so, as none of us, apart from members of the Select Committee, knows what was said in evidence.

The Attorney-General: May I respond to my hon. Friend by reading the very next sentence of my speech? First, I must congratulate him on the petition and on raising a very important matter for the House and the liberty of the subject. The House can reasonably expect a substantial case to be put on behalf of a petitioner, but it must also be mindful of the fact—this meets my hon. Friend's point—that a petitioner is unlikely to be well placed initially to make his case, since he will have little or no knowledge of what confidential material the Committee may hold.

The Chairman of the Select Committee has outlined the broad nature of the confidential material in the possession of the Select Committee, which has been of immense help to the House and to the solution of this problem. Such indication as he has thought right to give might be sufficient in itself to show the parties to this litigation that little or none of it is likely to have any materiality, but I am seeking to guide the House on a broader basis than any individual case. In another case where such procedure is followed, the material may assist it to put forward some properly reasoned argument as to why the House should accede to a petition in a particular case.

Mr. Chris Smith (Islington, South and Finsbury): I intervene simply because, while Mr. Kevin Maxwell is a constituent of the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson), Mr. Ian Maxwell is my constituent, so I have been following the progress of this matter with some care and attention.

The Attorney-General seems to be spelling out clearly the difficulty facing us—we have to balance the need for natural justice to be done in any instance against the important procedures and rights of Select Committees. Does he intend to deal with the matters that my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), as Chairman of the Select Committee, raised in his closing remarks? He suggested that perhaps the Select Committee on Privileges, or some other body in this House, should consider the general procedures that should be put in place for future occasions of this type.

The Attorney-General: The fact that the hon. Gentleman is present this afternoon to represent the interests of his constituent in his difficult situation reinforces how seriously the House takes such a matter. I am not minded to go into detail about whether it would be wise to refer the matter to the Privileges Committee at this stage. I simply intended to sketch a possible course of action that the House might approach. My having suggested it might or might not commend it as something that the Privileges Committee might consider at some stage. I am not sure that we have reached that stage and I am not rushing to urge the House to pass the matter off to that Committee at this stage.

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): As I understand it, my right hon. and learned Friend is saying whether the confidential information should be revealed—which, as we all recognise, raises important questions for Select Committees. Even if such information were revealed, would we not still run into the problem with article 9 of the Bill of Rights, which is that the proceedings of this House cannot be called into question? From time to time, courts deal with matters of fact, but cannot call into question matters that are proceedings in this House. The fact that the information is revealed does not seem to get the defendants in this case much further forward.

The Attorney-General: The answer to the question that my right hon Friend quite properly asks is that it might or it might not. For example, if it raised a matter that led to anything said by hon. Members being called into question, of course it would run firmly in contravention of article 9 of the Bill of Rights; but some documentation or information might simply point, quite silently, to the existence of some other witness who might be able to throw light on some aspect of the case that no one realised had existed. Nothing would need to be said, but that information might nevertheless be of significance.

I give that example not to suggest that it happens or is likely to happen in the present case—I cannot possibly know—but to show that there could be value in allowing the judge, and possibly the parties, to look at such documentation without anything ever having to be discussed. So my answer to my right hon. Friend is that it might or it might not.

The House needs to reflect on what should happen if we were to reach the stage that a properly reasoned case could be and had been put before the House. One option open to the House might be to direct that the material be passed to the trial judge, who would be invited—if he were willing to do so—to read the documents and advise the House whether, in his opinion, it was necessary in the interests of justice that all or any of them be disclosed to the parties, and, if so, to give some indication of reasons why. I emphasise that the House could then reconsider the matter on the basis of the best information reasonably obtainable—in other words, the view of the judge—and itself decide whether to allow the material to be disclosed to the parties through the judge for use at the trial.

Sir Terence Higgins: Does not my right hon. and learned Friend understand that if we were to do what he suggests, we would be inviting witnesses to appear before Select Committees to give evidence, saying that of course it would be confidential except, if it came up subsequently, a judge may be asked to decide whether the material would be disclosed, in which case it would no longer be confidential? The mere suggestion of that happening is bound to inhibit the work of Select Committees. My right hon. and learned Friend must realise the dangers of what he is proposing.

The Attorney-General: I recognise what my right hon. Friend says. I recognise the importance of the matter. It is not unique to the problems of the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Wantage sought to draw a parallel between the confidentiality that can apply in cases where the system of public interest immunity certificates is used, which, as the House but not everyone remembers, was created by the common law judges and about which I know a certain amount.

A purer parallel is between the motion and the system in the courts of asking for a witness summons—for a witness to come to court and bring documents: a sub poena duces tecum.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose—*

The Attorney-General: I will give way in a moment.

That is not available because the courts would not issue a sub poena duces tecum to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, the Chairman of the Select Committee, or to an Officer of this House, because the courts would be extremely careful to do no such thing. The proper way in which anyone should approach the House is, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage has done, by means of petition, so that the matter can be considered by the House as we are this afternoon. But, having said that, if one goes back to the sort of parallel of cases where a public interest immunity certificate is necessary, one is balancing interests in matters of confidentiality and secrecy, sometimes of the highest importance and matters of life and death, against what needs to be done in a court.

So, while I fully respect and sympathise with the points that I know will be put most forcefully by my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing, I do not believe that the position of the House is utterly unique. We are faced, as are others whether they are dealing with matters of national security or commercial confidentiality, with what in the end has to be a careful balancing act. I do not think that we have reached the balancing stage yet, but the principles are not fundamentally different.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: What precedent can the Attorney-General point to when Parliament has, in effect, handed over documents to the courts?

The Attorney-General: I do not think that I can. To some extent, we are treading new ground. I have discussed that matter with the House authorities and the Clerks. I may be forgetting something, but I do not think that there is any precedent.

Mr. Frank Field *indicated assent.*

The Attorney-General: I am grateful to see that my view is supported by the hon. Member for Birkenhead. We are thinking carefully and treading new ground.

The House, having, if it thought fit because a sufficient case had been put to it, vouchsafed the documents and information in confidence to the judge and having received a report from the judge with such reasons as the judge thought proper, could reconsider the matter on the basis of the best information reasonably obtainable. It could then decide—it is right that the House should decide—whether to allow the material to be disclosed to the parties for use at the trial.

I recognise even more forcefully than when I wrote these words that the House is anxious about these matters and fearful that it may be letting a genie out of the bottle if it takes even such a cautious course as I am considering. I suggest that that should not be the case. The process would be triggered only if the House were persuaded in the first instance that the petitioner had made a prima facie case as to relevance.

Having sought the assistance of the judge in the way that I have described—assuming that he would be prepared to give it—the House would take the ultimate decisions on his advice. The control over the documents would remain at all stages with the House.

I hope that it will be of some comfort to my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing that we have not yet reached that stage, because, for reasons that I have recognised, the House has not at present received any reasoned case—I make no criticism of my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage, as he could not do so—for the petition being acceded to.

At this stage, it is understandable that the House may be reluctant to accede to the petition. I am not encouraging anything further in this case—I am certainly not encouraging anything in the nature of a fishing expedition—but there may arise in future, possibly in this case and possibly in other cases, a need to consider the matter more deeply. The route that I have sketched might provide a possible way forward should it be required.

4.55 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): I am not seeking to wind up the debate; this is not the kind of debate which calls for a conventional process. The Leader of the House will make the winding-up speech.

We are grateful to the Attorney-General for what he has just said and the care with which he said it, but I depart from his words in one respect: I think that the procedures of the House of Commons are unique within the framework of our state. Therefore, it is difficult to find an analogy to fit our circumstances.

If this motion were passed, it would at a stroke finish the work of Select Committees in this House. I would not ever feel able to advise anyone to give any information in confidence to any Select Committee to assist with any inquiry that any Select Committee were undertaking, because it would be self-evident that, at any time in future years—there does not seem to be any time limit on the motion—the procedures, conversations, information and documents could at some time find their way into the public domain, however firm the guarantees of the then Select Committee. There were not many investigatory Select Committees of the House around when the Bill of Rights was drafted and approved in 1689. There may at some time be a case for updating the Bill of Rights. I do not think that that would be appropriate. I would stick with the original words and operate them in a modern context.

Since 31 October 1980, when the House abandoned the out-of-date and barmy rule that our published proceedings could not be referred to in a court—that rule was clearly ludicrous beyond belief—only one petition has ever been presented to the House. I shall not go into detail about that case; I say merely that it required the court appearance of two hon. Members as witnesses. As they were required to appear the day after the petition was presented, I understand that the motion was never moved. The Attorney-General is correct; this motion takes the House into uncharted waters. I cannot find examples of any similar circumstances when

[Mr. Jeff Rooker]

material on private proceedings of the House, in Select Committee or otherwise, has been demanded, albeit to be given to a judge.

If Kevin Maxwell were my constituent, I would have presented his petition, I would have advised him on the form of it and I would have sought to move the motion as the constituency Member. As a parliamentarian, I would have then given the reasons why I could not support the motion in the Lobby. If it had come to a vote, I would have clearly said that I would not support it and I would have voted against the motion before us today.

No case has been made regarding any particular item of information given in closed session to the Social Services Select Committee. It is not secret who appeared before the Select Committee. As the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) said, the session was some years ago. As such, it appears to be a fishing expedition of the most blatant kind and of the most breathtaking broadness in some ways.

Mr. Robert Jackson: The hon. Gentleman says that there was no secret about who gave evidence to the Committee. I am afraid to say that it was a secret. Only one name was known because it was mentioned in the House by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field). None of us—not I, not the Maxwells or anybody else—apart from members of the Select Committee knew who gave evidence.

Mr. Rooker: I was not referring to individuals; my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) did not refer to individuals. I remember, however, that when the spotlight was on the Select Committee, both when it met in public and when it met in private, there were television pictures showing witnesses, attended by their legal advisers, who were not answering any questions in public. To that extent, there was not a cloak of secrecy. The companies, the organisations and the trustees were known—although, I accept, individuals were not named.

The scope of the motion is breathtaking. I note that the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) did not ask the House to approve the motion. He tabled it as a constituency Member, as is right and proper. I do not think that it makes any difference that the motion leaves the matter to the judge to decide. The effect on those who give information in confidence to the House will be the same whether the information goes before the judge or is released to the courts.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, the Chairman of the Select Committee, has made it clear—I hope that the point is taken by Kevin Maxwell, his advisers and anyone looking at the proceedings—that the issues dealt with in private by the Select Committee were intended to enable it to decide what could be dealt with in open session so that nothing compromised either the defence or the prosecution in a future case. That was the whole purpose of the exercise.

We should continue to support the House's sub judice rule even though, occasionally, some hon. Members get very frustrated by its use and believe that it is being used to stop legitimate debate. We should always accept the Speaker's ruling on sub judice. We make it clear, therefore—the point could not have been made more clearly than by Madam Speaker's statement today—that this House does not seek to interfere in the courts or the administration of justice. Likewise, we do not expect the courts to have any role in questioning our proceedings when they are held in private session and are not even being reported to the House.

I have given considerable thought to the matter in the past few days in which it has come before the House. I have no perfect answer; I am not a lawyer. I have discussed the matter with my hon. Friends and I have had a brief conversation with my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead, for which I am extremely grateful. We must, however, have regard to the administration of justice, especially if there is any potential for a miscarriage of justice affecting any defendant. That is crucial, because we spend enough time bringing to the attention of the House constituency cases and seeking justice for them. We must be mindful of that point.

I do not accept any analogy with the Matrix Churchill case and the issue by Ministers of public immunity certificates. The defendants in the Matrix Churchill case sought to bring out in their defence and into the public domain only the fact that they had been involved in private meetings with Ministers and members of the security services. They sought to bring out not the details but the fact that they had had such meetings. If that fact was in the public domain, it would enable any reasonable person on the jury to know that what they had done had been done with the compliance of the state and with the knowledge of Ministers who had been party to some of the meetings.

That is clearly not the case with Kevin Maxwell. He has not been party to any proceedings in the House that he might want to use in his defence in court. If he had been, the case would be wholly different and we should have to look at it differently. The House has a duty to maintain the confidence of those who give evidence in closed session. It is crucial that we ensure that we do not prejudice the interests of any defendants before the courts and that we do not prejudice anything that has happened and is happening in terms of the members of the Maxwell pension fund, the trustees and the recipients of the pension funds putting together again their pension arrangements.

It is clear from what my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead has said and from reading between the lines of the report to which he referred, the second report in the 1992-93 Session, HC 527, that, in the global arrangement brokered by Sir John Cuckney, some parties dissented from proceeding to civil cases in the court in exchange for deals to transfer money back into some of the pension funds. It would be wrong for those confidences to be broken and to come into the public domain. We have to balance that point against the fact that no clear case has been made for any particular document that would be material to the defence of Kevin Maxwell to be released.

I am confident that, in refusing to support the motion today, as I hope we shall, we shall not either impede the defence mounted by Kevin Maxwell or assist the prosecution. That is an important point. Nothing that we do today will assist the prosecution. We are simply asserting the rights of Parliament which were laid down under article IX of the 1689 Bill of Rights. In no way do we contribute to any future claim of a miscarriage of justice; we would not be party to that in refusing to support the motion today. The article is there for a reason, and I do not think that we should set it aside.

5.5 pm

Sir Terence Higgins (Worthing): The motion raises difficult and complex issues. I rise to speak as a Member of Parliament, because I believe that it is important to preserve the relationship between this House and the courts of law, and, more especially, as Chairman of the Liaison Committee, which has a particular responsibility for ensuring, as far as possible, that that relationship works effectively.

I feel bound to say in the clearest possible terms that I believe that acceptance of the motion would seriously undermine the ability of Select Committees to operate effectively. I also feel bound to say that that point is true of the compromise suggested by the Attorney-General. I had hoped to persuade my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) to withdraw his motion. I still hope that he will, but I hope that he will not do so on the basis of the Attorney-General's suggestion. We want to be absolutely clear about the principles involved here, and I believe that the motion should be rejected on the ground of principle.

I understand, of course, why my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage tabled the motion. I believe that we should also stress the extent to which both members of the Select Committee and hon. Members who have constituents who have suffered as a result of the Maxwell affair have acted with the utmost restraint in refusing to do anything that might call into question the possibility of a fair trial.

There are two separate aspects to the matter. One is the general case of the availability of parliamentary papers and their use in the courts and the other is the availability of confidential papers. Those questions raise separate issues. Surprisingly, my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage made no real attempt to argue his case; he merely put it forward. He drew an analogy with public interest immunity certificates, to which I shall come in a moment, and simply said that there might be a conflict between the so-called common law aspects and parliamentary privilege.

It is important to stress in that context that this has been a dilemma over the centuries. It has always been clear, despite the conflicting considerations, which way the balance comes down—in favour of Parliament. Even as short a time ago as last year, the Privy Council, in dealing with a case that had been said to involve a conflict between the need to ensure that the legislature could exercise its powers freely on behalf of its electors, the need to protect freedom of speech generally and the interests of justice in ensuring that all the relevant evidence was available to the courts, came down clearly and said that the second and third factors could not be ignored, but that it was settled law that the first factor should prevail. I am astonished, therefore, by the Attorney-General's remarks this afternoon.

That having been said, it seems to me that that is the short answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage. It is settled law that, where there is a conflict such as he posed, the decision comes down in favour of privilege and for a very good reason: over the centuries, we have had a Bill of Rights. I am never clear why it is called a Bill of Rights, because it is an Act of Parliament; it is the law of this country.

Article IX of the Bill of Rights, which has been quoted already, states:

"the freedom of speech and debate or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place outside of Parliament".

It seems absolutely clear to me, and I do not think that it is seriously open to dispute, that the documents for which my hon. Friend is asking are proceedings in Parliament. It is equally clear that there is no point in the defendants asking for proceedings if they are not to be called into question. Therefore, it is right that the motion should be opposed and defeated, as I hope it will be, or that my hon. Friend should withdraw it. My hon. Friend asked for dispensation in this case, but that would be an extremely dangerous precedent.

I shall come to the confidentiality aspect later, but, in any case, it seems to me that one cannot by a motion of this sort overrule an Act of Parliament. I presume that if we wanted to go along that route, we would need parliamentary legislation. We would have to amend the Bill of Rights and overrule article IX.

I come now to whether the matter should be referred to the judge. That seems to me to be as dangerous in respect of confidentiality as any other arrangement which has been suggested. My hon. Friend's motion refers to the 1980 resolution. As I understand it, whether proceedings of the House have been published or whether they may be published but have not yet been, they still cannot be called into question in the courts.

It is therefore very difficult to understand, except in the rather strange example quoted by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General—he did not quote any others in support of his argument—how, even if the documents were made available, they could avoid being called into question. The object of the exercise is not the least bit clear.

Under the dispensation of the 1980 resolution, the courts constantly now look at proceedings in Parliament to examine the facts, but they cannot call them into question, which is likely to happen in this case. It has already been pointed there has been no specific request for documents. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General pointed out, this is an extensive fishing expedition.

Mr. Robert Jackson: I am sorry to interrupt my right hon. Friend. If nobody knows what transpired in the Select Committee, how would it be possible to ask for any specific document from it?

Sir Terence Higgins: That is a fair point, but I assume that some specific aspect of proceedings is being asked for. It seems to me that a request ought to be quite specific, and I thought that that was generally accepted.

Let me deal with the analogy that was suggested with the Scott inquiry. That is a totally false analogy and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) described clearly why it is false, although my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General seemed to think that it had some validity.

The crucial question in respect of whether a public interest immunity certificate or parliamentary documents should be released is what is the public interest. The answer in this case does not involve a specific decision, as might be the case in the Matrix Churchill affair. It is a general decision about the public interest in a Committee being able to obtain information on a confidential basis and not to find that, after the matter has been referred to

[Sir Terence Higgins]

a judge or for consideration on the Floor of the House, it has been overruled and its word has been broken. The public interest in that general case is very different from that in considering whether a public interest certificate should be issued in a specific case. In my view, the analogy of my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage breaks down.

Mr. Frank Field: I have been pondering the point the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) raised about how defendants would know what was going on in a Select Committee if it met in private. It would be possible, would it not, for the defence to write to the Chairman of the Select Committee and ask, in this instance, whether there were any discussions on the disappearance of funds and the channels by which those funds disappeared from the pension funds? Had we had such a letter, we would have replied that we never discussed that topic. Other very specific inquiries, to which the defence could have got answers, could have been made to the Select Committee.

Sir Terence Higgins: The hon. Gentleman, as Chairman of the Social Security Select Committee, has been much more involved with the matter than me. In his outstanding speech, he described the Select Committee's attitude. I commend the point that he just made to my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage; it is a better response to his intervention than I was able to provide on the spur of the moment.

I shall return briefly to the compromise put forward by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. It seems to me to have a great many dangers, and the mere suggestion that we might go down that road will, to some extent, make things more difficult for Committees. I regret the fact that he made that suggestion.

The compromise seemed odd, and suggested that my right hon. and learned Friend would put the matter to the judge, the judge would come back to the House and then the House would say whether it thought that the matter was relevant. I do not understand how on earth the House is supposed take a view if it does not have in front of it all the information that, it is said, should be published. The House can take a view on the matter only if the documents are published, and if they are published the matter is overtaken by events. I simply do not see how that interesting procedure will work.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Is not the Attorney-General's suggested course the procedure observed in respect of public interest immunity? In that procedure, as I understand it, a Minister issues a certificate covering particular material and it is for the trial judge to determine whether that certificate is upheld.

It seems to me that the Attorney-General was suggesting the public interest immunity certificate procedure, which is for Ministers to protect the Executive, whereas we are concerned with the protection of the interests of the House. Therefore, I agree entirely with those hon. Members who have been advocating that it would be extremely serious to venture down the road suggested by the Attorney-General or do anything to abandon what has been the practice of the House for centuries.

Sir Terence Higgins: I could not agree more with the hon. Gentleman. Let me also emphasise the difficulty of what the Attorney-General was suggesting. It not only uses the procedure that the hon. Gentleman outlined but involves coming back to the House for us to decide whether the papers should be released. There is no way that that can be debated on the Floor without thereby, willy-nilly, if I may use a strange expression in a serious context, making the papers available. They can appear in *Hansard*, which, in turn, can be referred to but not questioned in the courts.

The crucial point is one of very great importance to the House. I think that we would be ill advised today to do other than simply withdraw the motion on the basis of the arguments that I have put forward or vote against it, which I most certainly hope the House would do if there were any question of the matter proceeding further.

This is a dangerous situation and, as has been said, it could undermine the position that the House has taken under the Bill of Rights over the centuries and was, I understand, reaffirmed by the courts only a short time ago. On that basis, I think this has been a fascinating debate in many ways but, alas, to some extent dangerous for the effective working of the Select Committee system. In my view, the Select Committee system has been the most important innovation in parliamentary procedure in recent years. It has certainly been extremely efficient in holding the Executive to account far more effectively than one can often do at Question Time or in debate on the Floor of the House. It is important that the House should not allow a change of the kind suggested which could jeopardise the ability of Select Committees to hold the Executive to account.

5.19 pm

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I agree entirely with the right hon. Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins). I think that we are on a slippery slope. However, I wish to point out to the hon. Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) that, if there appeared in some contributions to the debate to have been the slightest criticism of him for tabling the motion, it was not intended. He has done the House a service in tabling it. I detect that he is perhaps not as sympathetic to the proposition in the motion which he has been required to table as he might appear to some. He has acted in the best interests of his constituent, and that is why he raised the issue, even if he was not altogether convinced of the case.

I have had some 28 years' aggregate experience of Select Committees. I have sat on four, and a number of times we took evidence in private. I think that, if we were to go down the suggested route, we would—not immediately but over a period of years—completely undermine the credibility of the Select Committee system. I can think of occasions when we were taking evidence when people stopped to ponder in mid-sentence the implications of what they were saying, even though they knew that the Committee was in private session. One can imagine that they were in turmoil as they wondered to what extent they could trust the Committee.

I recall the long series of sittings in the case of the complaint by the *Observer* against Mr. John Browne and the evidence given by a number of people to the Select Committee. Like every member of the Committee, I was conscious of the fact—that is why it took on the quasi-judicial responsibility—that we were considering

the implication of statements made to the Committee somehow getting into the public domain. That is why there were no leaks during the Committee's proceedings.

Another problem that concerns me is the distinction between the arrangements for giving evidence in a court of law and those for giving evidence to a Select Committee. I can foresee circumstances in which it might not be possible during a trial to secure access to information or draw on evidence which, in the view of some, is necessary to the trial, because of rules of evidence in the court of law that do not apply to a Select Committee. We might find that a Committee inquiry was worked up by members, by the press or, indeed, by anyone, in the knowledge that a trial was to take place outside because it was believed that the only way to secure access to information that might be critical to the trial—it might be only hearsay evidence—was to use the Select Committee system and, by petitioning Parliament, to secure access to the evidence. The judge would then consider whether it should be passed to those representing the defendant or the plaintiff. I am greatly concerned that we might find our system being manipulated.

Another case is currently the subject of great argument. I do not want to introduce a note of controversy into the debate so I shall raise the matter as delicately as possible, but the House will be aware that there has been a hearing of the Select Committee on Members' Interests relating to the hon. Member for Tatton (Mr. Hamilton). The question is whether, in the event that the Committee had taken evidence from people from whom it wished to take evidence, those giving evidence would have felt inhibited because they knew that a libel trial was to take place later.

No one today has drawn the distinction between criminal and civil proceedings. If we took the proposed route, we might end up with applications being made to the House in civil proceedings for information that might be beneficial in trials. If people felt inhibited in giving evidence for fear that it might be used in a trial, we would again have undermined the workings of the Select Committees.

I understand that there is an important balance to be struck between the privileges of Parliament and the rights of the individual, but we should not necessarily approach the problem in that way. We are securing the rights of the individual by protecting the privileges of Parliament.

5.25 pm

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): We are here to tackle injustice, not to tolerate, ignore or perpetuate it. The interesting question asked by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) is whether, by denying or withdrawing the motion, we would in the long term be helping to reduce injustice, which is part of the function of the Select Committee system, or whether the withholding of information would cause an injustice in a particular case before the courts at the moment.

I am glad that there is agreement that my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) did the proper thing in tabling the motion. It is clear that hon. Members in general have welcomed the opportunity to express their views. As has rightly been said, whether he is sympathetic to the petition put to him is not at issue. Whether he decides to press the motion to a vote or to withdraw it should not be taken as a judgment on the merits of the petition itself. The House has to try to decide what is right.

The hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) misdescribed the public interest immunity certificate system, which was a system created by judges. By signing a certificate, a Minister can make available to a judge documents to which public interest immunity would usually apply. The judge then decides whether the documents are material to the defence and should be disclosed to the defence.

To suggest that the public interest immunity certificate procedure is a way of withholding information is to turn the truth upside down. Anyone who has read the answers to the questions that I have tabled in the past year and a half will know that it was a judge-created system, not one created by Ministers or Parliament, to allow the release to the judge and, if relevant, to the defence, of documents which would usually be withheld. That is the extent of the parallel in this case.

Should information which may have been provided to the Select Committee be kept from the defence in a particular trial? The hon. Member for Workington rightly reminded us that the question applies not only in criminal cases but in commercial and other types of civil cases. I am not impressed by the historic negative—the notion that one cannot do something in a new way because it has not been done that way before. All our parliamentary conventions, and many of our constitutional conventions outside, are built on adaptations of and changes to the way in which things were done in the past, and changes have usually been made for good reason.

The question is whether there is a good reason for change. In this case there is not, because the information that would have come to the Select Committee, had it been relevant, would have been obtained from organisations or individuals which could be asked directly by those involved in the prosecution or the defence—because, of course, it might be relevant to either. Those organisations or individuals could have been asked directly to make the necessary information available. I suspect that there are opportunities to subpoena people to get them to court and ask what relevant information they have.

If my supposition is correct, the problem goes away. There can be no injustice if the petition is not accepted, but I do not think that we can leave matters like that. We should make it clear that Select Committees usually meet in public, that the information given to them will usually be published in their reports, and that they do not take evidence in private or in closed session unless there is good reason—for example, it might be clear to the Select Committee that it is wise to do so or a good case might be made by a witness giving evidence to the Committee.

Following this pointed debate, it might be worth some part of the House considering whether there are lessons to be learned, not especially from this case but from the issues behind it. Some of the points which have been made carry a good deal of weight. I am conscious that no one has seriously argued for the information to be made available, and I shall not do so myself. My primary purpose is to try to say that there are reasonable parallels with the public interest immunity certificate device, although they are not complete. I hope that people understand when that matter becomes relevant that such certificates provide a way of releasing information in a way which I think we do not intend to do today.

5.29 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I need to say something on the matter, as the House might expect, but I shall be brief as the arguments have been so well ventilated. I emphasise that I speak as Leader of the House and Chairman of the Committee of Privileges, and not in any collective sense on behalf of the Government. Clearly this is very much a matter for the House of Commons.

The entire House is agreed that my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage (Mr. Jackson) acted entirely properly in bringing the matter before the House today on behalf of his constituent, as did the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) in referring to his constituency interest in the matter. It is also clear that the House is agreed—the hon. Members for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), for Birmingham, Perry Bar (Mr. Rooker) for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden), my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Sir T. Higgins) and others expressed this view—that we are talking about a matter of great importance to the workings of this House and to the work of Select Committees in particular.

It cannot be denied that the ability of Select Committees to scrutinise matters of high public importance and to carry out their proper job of scrutinising the Executive would be impaired if witnesses who were invited to give evidence in private with the assurance that their evidence would be kept confidential then found that those assurances given by the Committee in good faith were to be ignored.

On the specific issue of the material sought in the motion, the hon. Member for Birkenhead, who is Chairman of the Select Committee on Social Services—he was speaking, I understand, with the unanimous support of the Committee—gave clear reason to doubt whether the material in question could have any bearing on the impending trial. Indeed, he made the point that the material largely relates to events which took place after those events which gave rise to the charges in the case.

Some slightly different nuances of view—I put it no stronger than that—have been expressed by Members as between those who have suggested that there will never be circumstances in which the House can contemplate such action, and those whom I judge to be more numerous, such as the hon. Member for Birkenhead and myself, who would be reluctant to go so far as to say that there are no conceivable circumstances in which the House would ever even be willing to contemplate a step such as the motion invites.

What is clear from the debate is that it would be a large and significant step indeed, but that the case for it has not been made in relation to this material in this case at this time. It is a step that the House could contemplate only if it were given powerful reasons to believe that there was no other way to avoid injustice. We all agree that in raising the matter my hon. Friend the Member for Wantage has very honourably and has properly reflected his constituency duty. However, I hope that, having heard what has been said in the debate, he may feel that it is right to withdraw the motion.

5.33 pm

Mr. Robert Jackson: We have had the serious and considered debate for which I was hoping. At the beginning of the debate, some criticism was directed at me for not positively arguing the case for disclosure. However, I was consoled by the remarks of the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), who hit the nail on the head. I did not see that as my function in presenting the motion: my function was to raise the issue and to ensure that there was a proper answer to it, and this I have done.

The criticism that no positive case has been made raises a wider point which my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General recognised. Without knowledge of the proceedings in question—which is, by definition, not available—there can be no material for such a positive argument to be put. Nor could there be any material for refuting that argument on any grounds other than the mere assertion of parliamentary privilege.

We have been told by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) something about what transpired in the private session of the Committee. That was all new knowledge to the House and to the public. He assured us that the material contained nothing in any way relevant to the interests of the defence. My constituent Kevin Maxwell will be grateful for that assurance and explanation from the hon. Gentleman, but he may be forgiven for asking why he should place his confidence in the interpretation that the hon. Gentleman has put on what might or might not be relevant to his defence. Why should he accept the simple assurance that there is nothing in the material that pertains to that defence?

He might well say, with all respect to the hon. Member for Birkenhead, that he would rather that the question whether there was anything relevant to his defence were remitted to a well informed and independent arbiter—the judge. That is precisely what the motion and my petition seek to do, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General recognised.

It is clear that the sense of the House is not in favour of the motion and I shall not press it to a vote. I believe that we would be well advised to take up the suggestion of the hon. Member for Birkenhead that the general issue should be considered by the Privileges Committee. I hope that the House will also take into consideration the suggestion made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General.

I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Speaker's Absence

5.35 pm

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I beg to move,

That the Speaker have leave of absence on Wednesday 21st June to receive an honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law from the University of Oxford.

I am sure that Madam Speaker will do so with the congratulations of the whole House.

Question put and agreed to.

European Communities

5.36 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr. David Davis): I beg to move,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and the Russian Federation) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): I understand that with this, it will be convenient to discuss the following motion:

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and Ukraine) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

Mr. Davis: The orders relate to partnership and co-operation agreements, or PCAs, which the European Union signed with Russia and Ukraine in June 1994. The orders specify the agreements as European treaties under section 1(3) of the European Communities Act 1972.

The agreements are mixed. In other words, some of the provisions fall within Community competence, while others fall within the competence of member states. That means that before they come into force, the agreements must first be ratified by all 15 member states of the European Union and by the Parliaments of Russia or Ukraine, as the case may be. The European Parliament must also give its assent to the agreements.

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davis: May I press on a little?

Mr. Gill: Will my hon. Friend give way on that specific point?

Mr. Davis: If my hon. Friend insists.

Mr. Gill: Can my hon. Friend confirm that the European Parliament has declined to ratify the agreement between the European Union and the Russian Federation?

Mr. Davis: That is the case at the moment. In the case of the UK, the draft orders need to be approved by both Houses so that we may ratify the agreements. The orders were approved in another place on 18 April. If this House chooses to approve the orders, they will then be submitted to the next meeting of the Privy Council.

I should like to give the House some background to the negotiations of the agreements, to highlight the main points and to place in context our broader relations with Russia and Ukraine. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate to the House how the agreements will make a substantial and practical contribution to the process of reform in Russia and Ukraine. They are therefore good for Russia, good for Ukraine, good for the United Kingdom and good for our objective of spreading prosperity and security across Europe.

Past relations between the European Community and the Soviet Union were governed by a modest trade and co-operation agreement signed in 1989. That agreement provided a basic framework for managing trade relations and for what co-operation existed at that time. Following the break-up of the Soviet Union, the European Community—under the stewardship of the UK's presidency in 1992—decided to intensify its relations with each of the newly emerging independent states.

The new situation called for a new kind of relationship based on partnership and practical co-operation, to help those countries through the difficult process of fundamental political and economic reform. The partnership and co-operation agreements, which are individually tailored to suit the requirements of each state, are designed to provide a practical and workable framework for that co-operation. The first such agreement was signed with Ukraine on 14 June 1994. Ten days later, after two years of negotiation, an agreement with Russia was signed in the margins of the Corfu European Council. President Yeltsin signed for Russia.

Since then, similar agreements have been signed with Moldova and Belarus. Slightly less wide-ranging agreements have been signed with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. We expect to lay draft orders on those agreements later in the year. We hope that it will soon be possible to negotiate partnership and co-operation agreements with the remaining countries of the former Soviet Union. But as I shall explain, the agreements contain important political and economic obligations, and we first need to be satisfied that those countries are in a position to fulfil such obligations.

Ratification of EU agreements can take years, so it is likely to be some time before the partnership and co-operation agreements with Russia and Ukraine enter into force. To bridge that gap, the European Union has negotiated interim agreements with each country. Those agreements will bring into early effect the trade provisions of the wider-ranging PCAs. As the House is aware, signature of the interim agreement with Russia has been delayed for reasons that I shall discuss later.

The partnership and co-operation agreements are explicitly based on respect for democratic principles. They aim to intensify political and economic links between the EU and Russia and Ukraine. That is to be achieved through regular political contacts, increased trading opportunities and wide-ranging economic co-operation. I shall highlight one or two of their most important features.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Davis: If my hon. Friend does not mind, I do not want to give way to interruptions all the way through my speech.

First, the agreements envisage regular political dialogue at all levels. The PCA sets up a framework for regular consultations including, in the case of Russia, biannual summits between the Presidents of the Council, the Commission and Russia. In the hierarchy of the EU's external relations, that means that the EU will have the same high-level contacts with Russia as with the United States. The agreements also set up co-operation councils in which Ministers will meet once a year to review the agreements and explore ways of building on them.

Secondly, the agreements are an important step in building closer trading links. They provide the Russians and Ukrainians with a route into the world market economy. In particular, they provide for the mutual abolition of quotas on most goods; most-favoured nation treatment on tariffs; and the abolition of discriminatory

[Mr. Davis]

internal taxes. But we do not intend to stop there. The agreements open up the prospect of negotiations—in 1998—about eventual free trade areas.

Thirdly, the agreements make it easier for us to do business. In particular, they set out terms on which our companies can set up in each other's territory; provide a clear regulatory framework for investment; and aim to bring Russian and Ukrainian practice into line with the European Union's in important areas such as the protection of intellectual property. Making it easier for people to do business in Russia and Ukraine is one of the most effective and practical ways in which we can help their economies develop.

Fourthly, the agreements provide for continued economic co-operation under the TACIS programme of technical assistance to help entrench real reform in Russia and Ukraine.

The agreements are an important first step in the process of integrating Russia and Ukraine into the wider framework of European economic co-operation. They set up a regulatory framework for trading and investing in Russia and Ukraine. They will therefore provide a more stable climate in which EU traders and investors can operate. They are an important first step, but they represent the beginning of a process, not the end.

The agreements contain an evolutionary clause, which will allow us to continue developing closer political and economic ties. The objective of a free trade area provides Russia and Ukraine with an incentive to continue the kind of economic reform that we want them to pursue. Helping Russia and Ukraine to develop proper, functioning market economies is the best way in which we can help them achieve greater prosperity. That is in their interests and ours. As well as helping to underpin our security through their prosperity, that process creates new markets, bringing greater opportunities for European exporters.

The agreements offer a practical example of the European Union serving the purposes that we want it to serve: encouraging political and economic reform; promoting more open, liberal trade; and making it easier for our businesses to explore new markets. Those are key UK objectives. Through the agreements, the EU is helping us achieve those objectives.

I shall say a few words about the political context in which we are addressing the agreements. The agreement with Russia was signed amid great optimism about the prospects for Russia's relations with the west. Events in Chechnya have cast a cloud over that relationship. Some people have said that the west should punish the Russians by withdrawing co-operation. We believe that that would be a mistake. The west cannot, and does not, turn a blind eye to what is going on in Chechnya, but we shall not help our powers of influence over the Russian Government by closing off all avenues of co-operation.

More specifically, some people say that it is wrong to proceed with the Russia PCA until the situation in Chechnya is resolved. I see the weight of that argument, but it is important to remember that we are in the middle of a long process. The ratification procedures of some other EU member states will take longer than our own. We are not committing ourselves at this stage to bringing the agreement into force on a particular date.

Once every member state and the European Parliament have ratified the PCA, a separate decision will still be needed to bring it into force, and it will then be right to assess the position in Chechnya before proceeding to take that final step. That will be the most effective moment to use the agreement to influence Russian behaviour—if we judge that to be necessary at the time.

That, however, is still some way off. In the meantime, our overall objective—to underpin political and economic reform in Russia—will remain unchanged. I therefore ask the House to demonstrate its support for that long-term objective by approving the principles behind the partnership and co-operation agreement.

Meanwhile, the interim agreement is now ready for signature. But European Union Foreign Ministers decided that, before they would approve signature of the agreement, progress would be required over Chechnya in four areas: co-operation with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe; discussions leading towards a political settlement; access for humanitarian aid; and moves towards a ceasefire. There has been considerable progress against those criteria: the Russians have allowed the establishment of a permanent OSCE presence in Chechnya; discussions with Chechen representatives are under way; and humanitarian aid is freely flowing into the areas worst affected by the conflict. A permanent ceasefire has not yet been established, but that is not solely within Russia's gift. There have, however, been encouraging moves in that direction.

The Foreign Affairs Council, meeting on 29 May, noted the progress made and hoped that, with further progress over a ceasefire, signature would shortly be possible. We should like that to happen sooner rather than later, as continued delay in signature risks damaging the wider EU-Russia relationship and, with a lengthy guerrilla war in Chechnya now possible, there is little more leverage to be extracted from the interim agreement. As I said, we may wish to return to that question when deciding whether to give final approval to the main agreement. Our decision then will depend on the evolution of events in Chechnya and the extent to which they are controlled by Russia in the meantime.

In my view, it is no less important that the European Union does everything in its power to help Ukraine achieve stability and prosperity as an independent, sovereign nation, but we cannot do that for it. I am delighted that the Ukrainian Government now appear genuinely committed to establishing real, lasting economic and political reform. The partnership and co-operation agreement will help that process along.

I am pleased that the EU and Ukraine have taken an important step forward by signing the interim agreement in Brussels last week. One important element of our co-operation with Ukraine is on nuclear safety. In that context, I particularly welcome the commitment made by President Kuchma to close down the Chernobyl power station by the year 2000. I am encouraged that that decision has enabled the EU to release substantial amounts of much-needed balance of payments assistance.

It is clearly in all our interests that the process of reform in the former Soviet Union, especially in Russia and Ukraine, should succeed. The success of that process does not lie entirely in our hands. I believe, however, that through those agreements, the European Union will make a significant contribution to help that process along.

I commend the orders to the House.

5.59 pm

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): The Opposition do not seek to divide the House or to oppose formally the orders giving our consent to the partnership agreements with Russia and Ukraine. Having listened carefully to the Minister, and having agreed with many of the things that he said, we none the less wish to express reservations and ask questions, because a great many issues are raised by the orders and we are considering together two countries that are very different economically, politically and socially.

As the Minister said, the partnership agreements are wide-ranging, covering many different aspects, but I agree with him that the provisions concerning political dialogue and respect for human rights are especially important. We feel especially worried about those issues when considering the present position in Russia.

Obviously, it is correct, as the Minister said, that we should look to the long term. In the long term, we have the possibility of creating a huge economic free trade area—a huge market which, if it is established in circumstances of economic growth, might be of enormous benefit to the newly democratising countries and to us in the west.

I shall say a few words about each of the agreements in turn, beginning with the one that relates to Ukraine.

I think that there is a general feeling, which I believe was reflected in the discussion about the agreements that took place in another place, that Ukraine has achieved a great deal lately, especially in its efforts to make economic reforms. Certainly, great satisfaction was expressed, which I echo, with the fact that Ukraine has signed and acceded to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

We very much welcome the agreement that has been reached and, one hopes, will be implemented, concerning the Chernobyl nuclear reactor. Many of us were greatly moved by accounts that have been given recently of the enormous number of children—1 million—who have been maimed and damaged by the effects of fallout from Chernobyl. We know how very widely those effects have spread, not only in Ukraine but throughout the continent of Europe and even further afield.

We know too that Ukraine, in its present economic position, finds it difficult to tackle these problems and to make proper provision concerning the closing down of the Chernobyl power station.

For that reason, we very much welcome the balance of payments support agreement that was signed in December 1994. Perhaps, if the Minister is replying to the debate, he will say something about the way in which that will work in practice, about what the effects—if any—have been, and about the precise way in which he envisages further economic co-operation between the European Union and Ukraine developing.

As I understand it, agriculture is not part of those partnership and co-operation agreements; perhaps the Minister will give us more information about that. Was agriculture mentioned as a concern by Ukraine in its discussions about the agreement? I ask that especially as Ukraine was traditionally the bread basket of the entire region and, in the right circumstances, obviously might have a very important agricultural role to play. It may be a sector of the Ukrainian economy that can be part of future economic success, although circumstances need to be rather different from now.

While I have said that we approve of many of the political and economic changes that have taken place in Ukraine recently, I am aware that there are many current difficulties between the President of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Parliament. Perhaps the Minister will give us up-to-date information about that. Certainly it appeared as if the President was going to appeal to the people over the heads of Parliament and the other political institutions, but that move to hold a referendum was, as I understand it, being blocked by Parliament. It would be interesting to know whether there are any further developments on the political front that the Minister feels that he can share with the House in replying to the debate.

I shall now turn to the agreement with Russia. Obviously, I agree with the Minister that it is terribly important to do everything that we can to help economic and political reform in Russia, and that we must keep our eyes fixed on the long-term benefits of achieving that. However, the difficulties and obstacles to that reform process are very great, and are not helped by various political actions that have been taken recently by the Russian Government.

The hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill), in one of his attempts to intervene on the Minister, drew attention to the fact that the European Parliament has said that it does not wish the partnership agreement with Russia to be ratified until more progress is made in resolving the Chechnya situation and in tackling abuses of human rights and responding to the anxieties very strongly felt in the European Union about that matter.

Opposition Members can sympathise with the opinion of the European Parliament about that, and it was a factor in the decision not to ask for a Division in the House this evening that we know that reservations are being expressed there, and that the ratification procedure is unlikely to be quick in any case. We hope that, during that ratification procedure, some progress may be made, especially regarding Chechnya.

I also understand that the ratification procedure, which, as the Minister explained, is sometimes slower in some other European countries than in ours, has run into difficulties in Denmark. Perhaps the Minister has some information about that, which he can share with us.

In Chechnya, appalling atrocities have been committed, a great many innocent civilians have been killed and large numbers of people have been dispossessed of their homes. The Russian population in Chechnya has suffered appallingly in that conflict, as well as the Chechen population. In spite of what the Minister said about OSCE involvement in Chechnya, which I welcome, there appears to be a marked absence of negotiations between the Russian Government and representatives of the Chechen people. Many of us would like to be assured that there will be negotiations in future and that the appalling military action, which has caused such widespread concern and dismay elsewhere in the world, will not continue.

Obviously, when we deal with Russia, it is important, as my hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary wrote in an interesting article, that we do not put all our eggs in the Yeltsin basket. There has been a tendency in the west to stick with the person in power whom we know, because of fear of change. Yet there is plenty of evidence to show that many political groups and movements in Russia were deeply distressed at events in Chechnya, and opposed the actions of Yeltsin in that part of the world. We need to

[Ms Joyce Quin]

ensure that our links across the democratic board in Russia are as good as possible from now on, and that we do not simply seek to bolster one side without having links with everyone who is interested in democratic and economic reform in that country. The political dialogue envisaged by the partnership agreements is a very important element, but we must use that dialogue to ensure that the reform process is underlined and not undermined.

We discussed the partnership agreements generally in European Standing Committee B on Tuesday 28 February this year and I was a little disappointed by some of the comments of the Minister's colleague, the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). Members of the Committee asked him about some of the most contentious and difficult aspects of the negotiations and he replied that, as he was not a party to those negotiations, it was difficult for him to identify the controversial matters.

I would welcome the Minister's confirmation of the most difficult and controversial areas. The documents that we have are detailed and technical, but they do not reveal the political feeling or the climate of opinion that surrounded the negotiations. I think that it would be useful for hon. Members to be aware of the flavour of the negotiations and what, if anything, caused particular difficulty.

It is interesting that both partnership and co-operation agreements contain articles relating to labour conditions. Article 23 of the partnership and co-operation agreement with Russia states:

> "Russian nationals, legally employed in the territory of a Member State shall be free from any discrimination . . . as regards working conditions, remuneration or dismissal, as compared to its own nationals".

I tackled the right hon. and learned Member for Grantham about that issue when we considered it in the European Standing Committee. It seems very ironic that the Government have agreed to that labour clause, of which I approve very much, yet they have done their best to ensure that British nationals who are working in Germany—under what, as a good Geordie, I like to refer to as the "Auf Wiedersehen, Pet" directive—do not enjoy the same good working conditions as German nationals who are employed by the same firms. It seems rather odd that the Government are prepared to see Russian nationals win those concessions but, at the same time, to deny such concessions to our own nationals. Perhaps the Minister will address that issue when he replies to the debate.

I turn to another subject that I have referred to previously in Committee and which I do not apologise for bringing before the House. I am concerned about the relatively low level of trade that the United Kingdom has with the countries of central and eastern Europe, including Russia and Ukraine. The figures supplied to me by the House of Commons Library show that Britain comes behind Germany—which is well in the lead—France, Italy and, in some cases, the Netherlands in our level of trade with Russia and Ukraine. Our trade situation is deplorable in central and eastern Europe generally and we are losing out in terms of both exports and imports.

I am convinced that those countries, such as Germany, Italy and France, which have built up close trading relationships with the countries of central and eastern Europe, including Russia and Ukraine, will benefit from that trade in the long term. It is extremely disappointing that we have slipped behind in our trade with those countries—indeed, it has been a consistent slip over four or five years.

That is particularly disappointing because as long ago as 1989 the Select Committee on Trade and Industry detected a tremendous willingness among the countries of central and eastern Europe to trade with the United Kingdom. The Select Committee also pointed out that the English language was being used more widely in the countries of central and eastern Europe to the extent that it was becoming the second language after the countries' native languages. It is extremely disappointing that we have not built up our trade with those countries in the way that we anticipated.

I do not know whether the Government are addressing that problem across all Departments, but they certainly should do so in order to ensure that we can build close trading relationships. I am certain that that will lead in turn to close political relationships, which are sure to be of benefit in the future.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend makes an interesting point about the widespread use of the English language. Perhaps by allocating more resources to the British Council, which is doing excellent work in Russia at present, we could extend the knowledge of this country overseas. I think that our language is probably our most exportable commodity, but unfortunately we do not seem to recognise that fact.

Ms Quin: I agree with my hon. Friend. I also pay tribute to the work of the British Council, but I believe that its activities could be expanded in the future. The same is also true of the BBC World Service. The BBC is involved in some very innovative and exciting projects, in partnership with organisations in Russia and throughout central and eastern Europe. However, that work is on a fairly small scale and, in view of the status of English as a world language, my hon. Friend makes an extremely valid point.

Investment is obviously also important. I understand that the partnership and co-operation agreements contain incentives for investment in Russia and Ukraine. It would be interesting to learn whether the Government have a strategy for ensuring that those investment opportunities work to our advantage.

In conclusion, I make it clear that, in allowing the partnership agreements to be approved today, we are not approving of everything that is happening in Russia, in particular, or in Ukraine. We wish to encourage those countries to do better and the agreements constitute a mechanism through which dialogue between our countries can continue. I hope that we shall be able to explain our attitudes not only to one or two people in the Governments of those countries, but on a wider basis with the wider democratic forces within the countries.

It is vital to strike up the right relationship with the countries of central and eastern Europe, especially Russia, Ukraine and the newly independent states. The peace, security, prosperity and well-being of our continent—and indeed of the whole world—depend upon it. We must exert ourselves to the utmost to ensure that there is political and economic reform in those countries and that the basis for real long-term stability and prosperity is created.

6.7 pm

Mr. David Atkinson (Bournemouth, East): As we have heard, the ratification of the partnership agreement with the Russian Federation is being threatened with delay because of its actions in Chechnya. This is the first opportunity that the House has had to debate the situation in Chechnya since the Adjournment debate of my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson) a few months ago. It gives us a chance to make clear what we expect of the Russians in order to encourage the European Parliament and the member states of the European Union to ratify the agreement. My hon. Friend the Minister has referred to some of our demands in that regard.

I must stress how much I welcome the agreements in principle. The pursuit of greater political and economic co-operation must be in all our interests. The agreement with Russia represents a clear acknowledgement of the progress that that country is making in its commitments to democracy, human rights, a market economy, and security and co-operation in Europe which were enshrined in the Charter of Paris of November 1990, whose signatories included President Gorbachev and my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher. That charter, signed by the CSCE summit, symbolically ended the cold war in Europe.

Since then, the Soviet Union has been replaced by its 15 independent republics, most of which are making progress at varying speeds towards our standards of democracy and human rights. For the past four years, it has been my good fortune to have presided over the non-member countries committee of the Council of Europe, which monitors that progress and recommends when applicant countries qualify for membership to our Parliamentary Assembly. I am delighted to see the hon. Member for Easington (Mr. Cummings) in his place. He is a valuable member of the committee. I should also mention the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), who is a valuable member of the British delegation on the Council of Europe.

Today, the three Baltic states are members of the Council of Europe and in two weeks' time the Parliamentary Assembly will debate the accession of Moldova. Until its action in Chechnya, Russia had been making good progress towards satisfying our qualifications for membership. It had held free and fair elections to its two parliamentary chambers, the Federal Council and the state Duma. It is evolving a pluralist party system. More than 70 per cent. of its work force is now in the private sector and most, but by no means all, human rights are being respected in Russia today.

Towards the end of last year, it seemed to some of us that the two organs of the Council of Europe—its Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers—would be prepared to turn a blind eye to Russia's constitutional shortcomings and the clear inadequacies in its legal order and invite it into full membership of the Parliamentary Assembly in time, symbolically, for the 50th anniversary of VE day last month.

Russia's action in Chechnya, however, put paid to that, and rightly so. We have now suspended our consideration of Russia's application until we are satisfied with the response to the terms of the resolution that we passed on 2 February similar to the terms of the resolution passed by the European Parliament, which is holding up the ratification of the agreement before us tonight.

The principal concern behind our resolution was that Russia had demonstrated for all to see, even while it was pressing to join the Council of Europe, that it was prepared to ignore the entire purpose of the Council of Europe's existence—that never again should force be used to resolve our disputes. Moreover, for Russia, the principles enshrined in the Helsinki Final Act and all the mechanisms of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe to avoid conflict and resolve disputes peacefully, counted for nothing.

Since then, events in Russia have shown that a great deal of progress remains to be made on constitutional issues. For example, the right checks and balances must be achieved between the executive and the legislature and between the presidency and the Parliament, and there must be some control and accountability of the army before we can seriously consider the accession of Russia to the Council of Europe.

In respect of Chechnya, how do we expect the Russians to respond in order to encourage us to ratify the agreement before us tonight? My hon. Friend the Minister mentioned some of those demands and they are similar to those of the Council of Europe. First, we want an end to the military action. Ceasefires have been announced on a number of occasions, but the use of force continues in Chechnya, with a great deal of bloodshed on both sides.

Secondly, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other international organisations must be able to provide humanitarian assistance to the region without hindrance and interruption. I was glad to hear my hon. Friend the Minister report that that is now taking place. However, it is not yet enough, and I am sure that the organisations will require greater accessibility to the area where their assistance is most needed.

Thirdly, we seek the establishment of a political dialogue to solve the conflict and dispute peacefully using OSCE mediation in consultation with the Council of Europe. Although an OSCE mission is present, there remains hesitation on the part of Moscow in accepting its mediating role. Yet we already know from that mission that a Tartarstan form of autonomy would have been negotiable even before the conflict began, and could still form the basis of a settlement.

When the mechanisms of the OSCE are used as in the case of the Baltic states, in Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan, it can bring peace and the prospects of a solution acceptable to both sides, and where it has not been used as in Bosnia and, until now in Chechnya, it is war.

Our refusal to ratify this agreement with the Russian Federation, together with the suspension of Russia's application to membership of the Council of Europe is about as much as we can do to convince the Russian leadership that its old habits must die, however hard, if Russia is to be accepted into our common European hope.

Such a stand today is necessary to strengthen the forces of reform and democracy in Russia, as well as reflecting the concerns of the majority of the Russian people about the action in Chechnya. It is as well to make that stand now before the crucial parliamentary elections in December and the equally important presidential elections

[Mr. David Atkinson]

next year. Not to do so would encourage the forces of darkness which are still so prominent in Russia and which would return Russia to its old ways and plunge Europe back into a cold war.

6.16 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I shall be very brief, as I decided to seize the opportunity to speak. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) for saying what he did about our work on the Council of Europe. He is a highly respected and prominent member of the Council and does exceedingly good work there. I pay a genuine tribute to him.

I have returned from St. Petersburg, where I was making a programme for the BBC which will be on television next Wednesday evening, 14 June. It is called "The Travel Show" and goes out at about 8 o'clock. It is probably worth seeing for one thing only. We went to a prison in St. Petersburg on the banks of the Neva to see a most amazing sight. It is an absolutely appalling looking place and we could see the prisoners leaning out of windows waving their hands to their relatives and friends, who were standing on the other sides of the road by the river. The prisoners spit darts fashioned in the shape of a funnel and weighted down with a piece of chewed bread. It sounds strange, but the darts are extremely accurate. Those prisoners will do wonderfully well if they want to take up playing darts for real. They spit the darts out of the window to the other side of the road. It is very broad road, almost like a dual carriageway. Their relatives open up the funnels and extract the messages.

I raise the matter because it is an appalling abuse of human rights. The messages inside the funnels were in Russian, but I had them translated. I intend to present them to the committee on human rights in Strasbourg. The funnels contained such messages as, "We are not allowed visits. You cannot get a visit from a relative unless you are prepared to pay. We are crowded 13 into a cell. Why do not you bring the film crew into the prison and see what is actually happening?" That would have been interesting, but I doubt whether the Russian authorities would have allowed us to do so.

I say this because it seems a good opportunity to raise the issue and ask the Minister to make some representations to the Russians. We want the Russians to be fully integrated into the Council of Europe. We want good relations with the Russians in terms of the European Union and trading arrangements, but there is a price to pay; it is a basic price that includes human rights. In that one experience, I could see that human rights were being totally flouted and it is right to raise these matters with the Russians and ask them for a proper and adequate explanation.

6.19 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me so early in this important debate. I am naturally disappointed that the Minister did not allow me to intervene during his introduction to the debate, to seek clarification of why it is considered so important that these agreements be translated ultimately into treaties. Perhaps at the end he will explain that. As for the rest, I admired the picture that he painted of motherhood and apple pie, but I hope that the House will forgive me if I do not go down the same route.

Next week, a book called "The Perestroika Deception" will be published as a successor volume to a book entitled "New Lies for Old", in which the author, Anatoly Golitsyn, a Russian defector now living in deep cover in the west, predicted with chilling accuracy the nature and intentions of Soviet strategy—a strategy to which these agreements could be said to form a useful addition.

I hope that the House will bear with me if I take the opportunity that the debate affords to express my misgivings about these agreements. As a business man, I question the wisdom of entering into a collective agreement over which one has little or no control. I also question the wisdom of entering into agreements that are open-ended, and agreements with other parties—in this case, the Russian Federation—whose integrity is open to question.

One of the apparent contradictions between the words and actions of Russian leaders is well represented by their military inventory. It may interest the House to hear one or two quotations in this regard. On 10 January this year Lieutenant General James Clapper, United States air force, director of the United States Defence Intelligence Agency, testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence as follows:

"we continue to note large investments in their deep underground program".

The highly respected US defence analyst Sven Kraemer wrote in the fall 1994 issue of *Strategic Review*:

"Russia's network of superhardened deep tunnels and command and control bunkers is designed for nuclear war fighting and survival and remains strategically significant".

I could go on to instance how, next year, the Russian Federation will deploy the intercontinental ballistic missile SS24 known as Topol M, against which the west has no deterrent. According to General Sergeyev, Russia's nuclear commander, interviewed on 22 January 1995, the Russian SS25 ICBMs could be programmed to target the United States in minutes. Four new submarines were delivered in 1993 and another four were launched in 1994. Russia remains a nuclear super-power with at least 9,000 nuclear weapons at its disposal. It retains mobile ICBMs, and possesses the production base to deploy more of them. Neither Britain nor the United States possesses mobile ICBMs.

I am grateful to the Chair for allowing me to stray so far from the topic of this evening's debate, but I thought it important to point out that there is another side to the picture. Much as I commend the Government's efforts to encourage greater trade with eastern Europe and the former USSR, and to encourage friendship with those countries, there are other considerations too.

Whereas I have instanced my feelings as a business man, I now wish to express my opinion as a politician. I question the advisability of entering into an agreement which, among other things, institutionalises political dialogue. Thirdly, as a Member of the House I am bound to express my extreme disquiet about the procedures that permit so many of the decisions affecting the lives of all the people we represent to be made in the name of the British people but not necessarily by the people whom they elected to represent them.

Today's debate has its origins in the use or abuse—depending on one's perspective—by the Foreign Office of the royal prerogative. I will go so far as to say that Britain's predicament—particularly her difficulties over Europe—stems from a much too liberal use of the royal prerogative by the Foreign Office, which routinely enters into agreements with external parties, either bilaterally or collectively, which it then expects Parliament to endorse.

Such was the situation on 28 November last, when Parliament was invited to rubber-stamp the decisions made at the Edinburgh summit in November 1992. What the Government should have done at Edinburgh, but—wittingly or unwittingly—omitted to do, was to warn its European partners that in this country decisions affecting the public purse are the prerogative of this place, not of the Crown. Increasingly, however, our country's destiny is being determined by treaty under the royal prerogative and less and less by decisions taken by the House of Commons.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Is my hon. Friend suggesting some kind of linkage, in the sense that we should agree to partnership agreements of this sort only if Russia abandons a certain quota of its nuclear weapons?

Mr. Gill: No. I was describing the enormity of the Russian arsenal to demonstrate my belief that we should not accept that the only things that matter in this world are friendliness with the Russians and attempts to do business with them. There are also major practical considerations which we ignore at our peril. I hope that the people of this country, listening to or reading the debate, will not gain the impression that all Members of the House are prepared to do whatever appears expedient in terms of trade and friendship while ignoring a huge Russian arsenal for which I can see no justification.

If we could rely on the absolute loyalty and integrity of the Foreign Office, its extensive use of the royal prerogative might be acceptable. But it is well known that the Foreign Office is driven by its own collectivist ideology which gives priority to reaching open-ended, bilateral and collective accords. As a result, this country's freedom of manoeuvre is being ever more tightly restricted as, increasingly, we become prisoners of agreements into which the Foreign Office has entered on the nation's behalf and which Parliament seldom has the opportunity to debate, still less the ability to demur from.

The agreements are collective and have been entered into by a collective organisation, the European Union. Thus, not only does the Foreign Office tie us up in proliferating and ever more complex treaties and agreements, but the collective organisation to which the Foreign Office has committed us does the same thing in parallel.

As a matter of principle, I believe that we should be party to as few agreements and treaties as possible—especially collective agreements that leave us exposed to open-ended and dangerous pressures. But the Foreign Office apparently adopts the opposite view. The more agreements we sign, it appears, the better. That is instrumental nonsense.

Mr. Heald: Surely we want to build links between the west and the Russian Federation to avoid future instability. The agreements that we are discussing will have that effect. In a way, the more agreements we can have, the better.

Mr. Gill: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for intervening, because at last we are having a debate. I was disappointed when my hon. Friend the Minister did not give way to me. It seemed that the debate would have been given a better start if it had not begun with a monologue. I shall be pleased to debate these matters with my hon. Friend. As I advance my argument, I think that he will begin to understand what lies behind my introductory remarks. I hope that he will follow the arguments that I shall deploy.

The gist of my main argument is that the agreements that we are being asked to enter into, with the best of motives, may not necessarily be understood and may not necessarily be in the best long-term interests of the United Kingdom or of the interests of peace and prosperity in western Europe.

I am opposed to agreements with the former Soviet Union because I do not share the evident view of the Foreign Office that the leaders of the former Soviet Union can be trusted. On the contrary, there is ample evidence to suggest that the Russians are pursuing a devious strategy that is designed to lock the western powers into complex arrangements and then to dominate them.

The principle that Russia is following was summed up recently by its Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, when he said:

"The more states are intertwined with one another, the more durable will be the net of their relationships."

That is a succinct summary of the Russian strategy, which is to enmesh the western powers in networks that will render them impotent in every sense of the word.

Russia has a strategy, but we do not. Instead, we have only a series of policies. The difference between a policy and a strategy is that a strategy contains within it a secret manoeuvre or dimension, which is by definition withheld from the public domain, while a policy is openly stated.

My objection to proceeding with the draft agreements is that by endorsing them we shall be furthering the implementation of Russia's strategy to enmesh Britain and other western powers in a collective bloc that is intended to stretch from the Atlantic to Vladivostok.

Ms Quin: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that article 90 refers to a co-operation council that will

"monitor the implementation of this Agreement."

Article 107 states:

"If either Party considers that the other Party has failed to fulfil an obligation under the Agreement, it may take appropriate measures."

There is not the open-ended commitment that the hon. Gentleman is claiming.

Mr. Gill: I shall quote from the treaty which was signed between the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation in November 1992. It was a treaty of peace and friendship. Article 1 reads:

"There shall be peace and friendship between the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland."

The second sentence of article 3, which comprises seven lines, states that the parties

[Mr. Gill]

"affirm that relations between them will be governed in particular by their commitments under the documents of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, including the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris for a new Europe and the Helsinki Document of 1992."

If we take all these proposals in isolation, they appear to be innocent. But they cannot be taken in isolation. We must have regard to what else has been signed and the cross-referencing that ensues, which means that our freedom to manoeuvre as a country is severely circumscribed. That is part of the grand design of the Russian strategists.

I think that the hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) will agree that, when we are examining treaties, it is important to read their texts. It is necessary to read and understand the precise language that is used. That point will not be wasted on right hon. and hon. Members who are only now awakening to the significance and consequences of the Maastricht treaty, which sadly not all of us have read—I except myself.

I have read the documents that are before us and I question why we need a collective political dialogue between the European Union and Russia, especially in the light of the Russian strategy to establish hegemony over the Union. Britain's interests would be better served, in my opinion, by independent, bilateral, arm's length dialogue, and nothing more.

I note the use of the adjective "regular" in the draft agreements. When the EU uses "regular", it signifies an intention to institutionalise dialogue. In other words, the EU will become engaged in continuing negotiations with Russia. That is precisely what the Russian strategists intend.

I do not agree that we should allow the EU to have continuing dialogue and negotiations with the Russians, in whom it is unwise to place so much trust. The House should not facilitate a further erosion of our sovereignty, freedom of action and independence.

The political independence of the so-called successor states in Russia is strictly provisional. That has been made clear, inter alia, by Mr. Primakov, the head of the Russian foreign intelligence service. On 13 December 1994, *The Independent* reminded its readers that three months earlier Mr. Primakov had said in Moscow that, apart from the three Baltic republics, the other 12 former republics which belonged to the Soviet Union would largely reunite. In other words, the picture that we see now is not the one that may be established in the fulness of time.

By entering into agreements with the successor states, the EU will find that when the Soviet Union re-establishes itself, which I suggest it might well do, the agreements will continue after the model of the United Nations membership of Ukraine and Belorussia when the Soviet Union existed overtly.

The draft agreements suggest that the economic co-operation dimension is open ended. I do not agree that it is wise to allow the EU carte blanche to negotiate open-ended economic co-operation arrangements on our behalf. Does such negotiation mean—this is a serious and important question—that Russian experts, including security agents, will be allowed free rein within our military and industrial complex, in our industries and utilities, for example? Of course it does. The House should stop to think what such collective agreements would entail.

In "The Perestroika Deception", Anatoly Golitsyn shows that the west has fallen for an elaborate strategic deception and is being manipulated by a group of Leninist strategists. The object of Russian strategy is the destruction of the nation states and their replacement by collective blocs and networks, with the ultimate Leninist goal of world government. I am glad to see that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) is interested in what I am saying. I think that he is nodding in agreement. Every time that the House—

Mr. Tony Banks: Why are all the statues of Lenin being pulled down if there is a Leninist strategy?

Mr. Gill: The hon. Gentleman is gullible to think that the past is indeed the past. The absurdity of that approach never ceases to amaze me. What would the hon. Gentleman say if I crossed the Floor and declared that I was a socialist? Would he believe me? He would be wrong to believe me, because I am a capitalist, not a socialist. It stretches credulity to its absolute bounds to think that suddenly, overnight, all those who were Communists will suddenly adopt a new philosophy and belief, with the result that everything will be different. I use this opportunity to warn the House and the country that that is not the truth.

Every time the House approves one of these collective agreements, not least treaties agreed by the collective of the European Union, it contributes to the furtherance of the Russian strategy. It is high time that Parliament woke up to what is going on and ended the automatic acceptance of a politically correct view of the world. As a start, the House could do much worse than to make it clear to the Foreign Office that it disapproves of its tactics, of its collectivist approach to Britain's interests and of its evident practice of placing the interests of Moscow before those of this country and this country's people.

6.40 pm

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for calling me. I had not intended to speak; I intended merely to intervene, but my hon. Friend the Minister did not give way, so I am afraid that I shall have to detain you and him with a few remarks.

The agreement is very important because it promotes trade and opens markets, but it also extends democracy and human rights. The provisions of the treaties in that regard are extremely important. Perhaps even more important at this time, however, is the signal that it sends to the Russian Government, to Boris Yeltsin and to those who surround him and control and manipulate the levers of power in the Kremlin.

The Chechen war, which my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) mentioned, has shaken the Russian political system in a way that has not been fully recognised in this country. It was a shock to those who support the democratic and reform movement in Russia. I believe that they have not had the support from this country and from the west that they deserve.

What concerns me about going ahead with the partnership agreement is precisely the signal that it sends, because, contrary to what my hon. Friend said, Chechnya

has been largely ignored by the west. The conflict has involved the loss of 30,000 lives so far—most of them Chechen civilians, but, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) said, Russian civilians too. It has involved the loss of 16,000 young Russian conscript soldiers and the destruction of a massive amount of property throughout the Chechen Republic.

We should not have ignored the conflict—we ignore what it says about the nature of Boris Yeltsin's Government and the stability of the Russian regime at our peril. If we do not take proper account of the situation, address it now and learn the lessons that we should learn from it, it will come back to haunt us again and again in many years to come. In that respect, my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow was absolutely right.

My hon. Friend the Minister says that we are not sweeping the Chechen experience under the carpet. I believe that that is precisely what we are doing. We are not taking account, for example, of the cost of the Chechen war, which one Russian economist, Ilarionov, has estimated to be $5 billion so far. We, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union are providing the financial means for the Russian Government to continue that war. That is unacceptable. When we proceed with these agreements, we are supporting and rendering assistance to those within the Russian Government who believe that they can get away with it, that they can dupe the west, that somehow the whole situation will be ignored over time and that we can return to the status quo ante. That is extremely dangerous. I believe that the attitude adopted by the European Parliament—of refusing to ratify this agreement—was absolutely right.

We must also take account of other issues that show the true nature of the Russian Government at the moment. The House has expressed its concern—Germany in particular has shown its extreme concern—about the decision of the Russian Government to export plutonium-producing nuclear reactors to Iran. That clearly shows what a dangerous and unstable threat Russia poses in that region. We must bear in mind the comments and the attitude of the Russian Government towards the conventional forces in Europe treaty. Having signed up to it, they have chosen to ignore its provisions so that they can deploy thousands of extra infantry and tanks on their southern flank. That shows their attitude towards international treaties.

We should be absolutely resolute in our condemnation of the Russian Government's methods and practices over that, because if we believe that we can trust them when they sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, given what they have done with a similar defence treaty, we are absolutely mistaken. If we go ahead with the agreement, we must make it quite clear that we condemn absolutely the methods that they have used in Chechnya; that we condemn the fact that they have ignored the conventional forces in Europe treaty; that we condemn the fact that they are trying to sell nuclear reactors to Iran; and that we shall continue to resist them and continue to support those who truly champion democracy in Russia.

My hon. Friend the Minister should take very seriously Conservative Members' concerns about what is happening in Russia and about further extending our co-operation with the Russian Government. We should make it quite clear tonight, to anybody from Moscow who is listening and who is watching our deliberations, that we go ahead with the agreement with a very heavy heart and that we certainly do not intend that it should show any approval for the dangerous, destructive and destabilising policies that the Russian Government have adopted.

6.46 pm

Mr. David Davis: With the leave of the House—

Mr. Tony Banks: The Minister is a Marxist-Leninist stooge.

Mr. Davis: I have listened with interest to the views expressed by hon. Members, occasionally with amazement, particularly to the admission of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) that we are all capitalists now.

One of the most important challenges facing the west today is to build a long-standing, lasting, substantial relationship with the countries of the former Soviet Union, not for its own sake but our own interest. We in the west need to use all the means at our disposal to nurture what embryonic reform already exists, to act as a catalyst for further reform and to give the Russians and Ukrainians rewards and encouragement for continuing along the difficult road on which they have embarked.

The partnership and co-operation agreements make significant contributions towards building such a relationship, but I note the concerns that have been expressed about the merits of introducing the agreement with Russia at this stage, and take the points that have been made. The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin), who speaks for the Opposition, made some good points on that. My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East (Mr. Atkinson) gave a balanced view of it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Elletson)—he may be surprised to hear me say—made some very useful comments, too. His points about the weaponry of the former Soviet Union states, particularly Russia, are important, but we are conscious of them and took them into account in the treaties that we have with them—the CFE and the strategic arms reduction talks. We are not naive about them. I shall return to that in a moment.

I was rather amazed to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) refer to me as a collectivist. That is perhaps the obverse side of the comments made by the hon. Member for Newham, North-West. My hon. Friend asked specifically about the agreements and referred to them as treaties: they are not strictly treaties. We are required to ratify them because they are mixed agreements—some provisions fall within the competence of member states, and others within Community competence. All member states must ratify the agreements before they can enter into force. By ratifying the agreements, we provide the basis under UK law by which we can implement the provisions of the agreements.

The hon. Member for Gateshead, East was right when she intervened on my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow and said that the agreements can be suspended if we do not believe that the conditions that apply under them are being met, including human rights and other conditions. We are not, in that sense, becoming trapped in long-term agreements. The agreements are valid for 10 years. They can, of course, be renewed, but they can also be suspended throughout their duration. That is the important

[Mr. Davis]

component of the operation of the agreements—and, as the hon. Member for Gateshead, East pointed out, the co-operation councils will monitor their implementation.

In describing me as a collectivist, my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow missed the point, that bilateral dialogue with Russia and Ukraine will continue. Yesterday my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary spoke to Mr. Kozyrev, and raised a number of the points that have been raised today about human rights and similar matters.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow also said that we were caught in a web of treaties and agreements with Russia, such as the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris charter; but it is through such agreements that Russia has committed itself to respecting human rights, democratic norms and so forth. That means that, unlike the former Soviet Union, Russia cannot say that we are interfering in its internal affairs when we continue to challenge and criticise it over Chechnya. That—as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool, North will recall—was the classic refrain in the days of the Soviet Union.

It is true to say—my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow picked up this point, in terms of its obverse effect—that, under the conventional forces in Europe treaty and other agreements on the control of nuclear weapons, we are committed to allowing intrusive Russian inspections of our military establishments to check our compliance with weapons destruction provisions. But we have exactly the same rights in Russia: the commitments are reciprocal. I assure my hon. Friend that we send inspectors who are sufficiently expert to ensure that the Russians are complying with their obligations.

As the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is present, let me deal briefly with one of his points. We in the House have an objective: to ensure that our western institutions are used to engage Russia so that it acts according to internationally accepted norms of behaviour. That includes human rights, an issue that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has raised a number of times.

May I ask the hon. Member for Newham, North-West to write to me about the specific issue of prisoners? I cannot give him an instant response.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am grateful to the Minister for his response; I would expect no less from him. I have one of the darts to which I referred: it provides a graphic illustration of what I was saying. I shall bring it to the Minister, and I should be very grateful if he took the matter up.

Mr. Davis: I am only glad that the hon. Gentleman is not going to fire his dart across the Chamber. As he knows, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) deals with our relations with Russia, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's point to his attention.

Events in Chechnya show us all that Russia has a long time to go before meeting the standards that we expect, but my hon. Friends are wrong if they think that we do not take the position seriously. What we are debating, in fact, is not that, but the method whereby we can ensure that the Russian Government's behaviour improves.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, East raised the question of Chechnya and the OSCE. The OSCE brokered talks in Gorazde on 25 May between Russian representatives and those of Dudayev—led, I believe, by Dudayev's Justice Minister. Further rounds are planned, but for the moment the two sides remain far apart.

My hon. Friend also raised the question of the Council of Europe. I agree with him that Russia must go a good deal further to satisfy the Council that it is ready for membership. I understand that the human rights sub-committee is preparing to visit Moscow and Chechnya; I have no doubt that it will wish to discuss events in Chechnya, and the visits will also provide the sub-committee with an opportunity to raise other issues—such as prison conditions, which the hon. Member for Newham, North-West mentioned. We regularly discuss human rights matters with the Russians, and will continue to do so.

Both the hon. Member for Gateshead, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow raised the issue of the European Parliament. The text of the partnership and co-operation agreements has just been passed to the European Parliament; in formal terms, it has not even begun the process of assent, but we understand that the position has been clarified.

The hon. Lady asked me about ratification by Denmark. The timing of ratification is a matter for individual member states. Denmark has decided not to begin the process until the situation in Chechnya has improved, but—as I explained in my opening statement—by approving the orders we are not giving up the opportunity to maintain pressure on the Russians to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Chechnya. Once the process of ratification is complete, we will look closely at progress before making the concluding decision that will allow the agreement to enter into force. We are not giving up any levers by proceeding with the ratification process today—and, as the hon. Lady herself pointed out, we always have the lever of suspension, even after final ratification.

The hon. Lady said that she did not think that the United Kingdom was doing very well in regard to trade with Russia. It is not surprising that Germany has capitalised on its traditional influence. It buys gas from Russia—something that we are not in a position to do. Moreover, UK exports to the former Soviet Union have doubled since 1991. Russia is now the United Kingdom's 32nd highest export area. Two dedicated export promoters from the Department of Trade and Industry are working in Russia, and another will go in the autumn. I think that the Government are doing a good deal in that regard.

In 1994, exports to Russia amounted to £700 million—up 22 per cent. on 1993. Exports to Ukraine amounted to £86 million—up 18 per cent. Given the difficulties faced by some of the economies involved, that strikes me as a remarkable performance. UK investment in Russia can be measured by the fact that 250 UK companies have offices in Moscow, and the figure is increasing at a rate of 10 a month. I do not think that the hon. Lady gave sufficient credit to our performance; we have much to be proud of.

The hon. Lady asked which issues were the hardest to resolve. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow doubtless understands—given his views—when we deal with the Russians a hard bargain must always be driven; tough negotiations are involved. Banking, trade and nuclear materials are important examples of that. The Ukraine agreement was much more straightforward—largely because the negotiations on the Russian agreement preceded it. A liberal outcome resulted.

The hon. Lady mentioned aid related to the Chernobyl disaster. The G7 Naples summit last July agreed an action plan to help Ukraine to reform its energy sector, including the closure of Chernobyl. The G7 countries pledged $200 million in grant to support the plan and the European Union offered 100 mecu in technical assistance—in grant, that is—and 400 mecu in loans. The plan is now being discussed with the Ukrainians. As for the balance-of-payments aid related to that, European Union Finance Ministers have set certain conditions for the release of such assistance, including a requirement for progress on nuclear safety. We believe that those conditions have been met. Further delay in giving support for necessary economic reform would delay rather than advance the day when Chernobyl is closed.

The hon. Lady asked about agriculture. The agreements aim to help agrarian reform and the agro-industrial sector to develop domestic and foreign markets for agricultural produce. They also aim to achieve the gradual approximation of Russian and Ukrainian standards to Community technical regulations on industrial and agricultural food products. Beyond that, Ukraine did not ask for agricultural concessions. The agreement provides for co-operation between the European Union and the Ukraine to help the Ukrainian agricultural sector. That was as much as was asked for and given.

The hon. Lady asked about internal political aspects in the Ukraine. I am pleased to report that today President Kuchma and the Speaker of Parliament, Mr. Moroz, signed a constitutional agreement, approved by Parliament yesterday, bringing into effect the law on power, which was previously disputed between the President and Parliament. That agreement means that the President has been able to appoint a new Prime Minister. A new Government will be formed shortly.

I am confident that continued reform in Russia and the Ukraine is in all our interests and that we in the west must do what we can to encourage and to promote that, not blindly, and not by turning a blind eye to those matters that are most difficult and that need to be dealt with, but we must encourage it nevertheless. The partnership and co-operation agreements will provide an important political signal of the European Union's full support for the process of reform—that is the important point—and that in itself is valuable. More substantially, however, they will also provide practical and technical assistance in a range of sectors to help that process along. On that basis, I commend the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and the Russian Federation) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.

Resolved,

That the draft European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Co-operation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and Ukraine) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 20th March, be approved.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

English Football Supporters

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

7.1 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): In this Adjournment debate, I wish to raise the subject of the treatment of English football supporters abroad. It is best to declare my interests at the outset. I am a member of the board of Chelsea Pitch Owners, which earns me no remuneration, expenses or, I might say, even thanks. Secondly, I am a Chelsea season-ticket holder, which costs me £500 a year.

In view of the comments made by the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) in the previous debate, I should declare also that the Chelsea goalkeeper is a Russian. His name is Dimitri Kharin. As far as I am aware, he is not part of the Marxist-Leninist plot of which we have been hearing. If he is, I await next season with great interest.

I have been an avid Chelsea supporter for more than 40 years. During that long period, we have not been spoilt with success. If one adds to that my membership of the Labour party, I suppose that one can see that life appears to have dealt me something of a bum hand, but, in politics as in football, it is best to travel optimistically.

I last secured an Adjournment debate on the subject of football and the behaviour of football supporters abroad and at home on 19 April 1985. It might sound somewhat immodest but my speech on that occasion is worth a revisit. Among my recommendations to Neil Macfarlane, then Minister with responsibility for sport, were the following. I said that grounds

"should be all seating, covered and divided into small secure sections with closed circuit television."—[*Official Report*, 19 April 1985; Vol. 77, c. 596.]

I said that the courts should impose more custodial sentences on convicted hooligans and community work orders on match days for offenders, that clubs should provide many more voluntary stewards for self-policing of their crowds, that clubs should operate membership schemes, without which admission to grounds would be denied, that the police should set up specialised teams of officers to provide intelligence on known troublemakers, and that the police should travel with supporters to away matches and brief other local police forces.

I specifically urged that on the Minister in column 601. He said that he would draw the Home Secretary's attention to my suggestion, but it took until March 1990—some five years later—for the national football intelligence unit to be set up. It took until 1989, under the terms of Football Spectators Act 1989, for exclusion orders to be implemented for convicted hooligans. Regrettably and tragically, it took the Hillsborough disaster on 15 April 1989 to produce the Taylor report and the requirement for all-seater stadiums.

I mention those items of 10 years ago not to state my claim for being particularly original in my thinking but simply to illustrate that, if only Ministers had listened more carefully to those many football supporters who know something about the game as a spectator sport, so much trouble could have been avoided in recent years and possibly many lives could have been saved.

Politicians who know little or nothing about football but who do not hesitate to rush into television studios or into print in reaction to a particular event are a wretched

[Mr. Tony Banks]

nuisance. Similarly, legislation that follows in the same knee-jerk fashion is often far more trouble than help. I yield to no one in the House or even outside in my condemnation of those brain-dead louts, fascists and drunken troublemakers who have done so much damage to our national game. That is what my 1985 debate was all about, warning Ministers about events that were then taking place—to which no great political attention was being paid—and the likely consequences of a lack of action.

There are times when it does not give one any satisfaction to say, "I told you so," even in politics, but the trouble is that the activities of that small and unrepresentative minority have led to the reputation of English football supporters as the scum of the footballing world. I stress "English" football supporters, because the Scottish, Welsh and Irish supporters enjoy a favourable reputation in football.

The image of the English supporter as a thug has now tragically taken a firm hold in public perception, but the image is simply not the reality in respect of the great majority of football supporters. Most supporters are normal decent people who love their club and the game. They are young, old, black, white, male, female, professional workers, skilled workers, unskilled workers, employed and unemployed. Football is a great leveller and people are accepted when they are a club supporter without reservation or qualification.

People do not ask supporters who they are and what they do. They just accept them as football supporters and one of the family. It breaks down class barriers and, for most, engenders a great feeling of camaraderie and togetherness. Those are the realities of football supporting for the great majority, but, regrettably and tragically, it is not true of all supporters. It is that wretched but significant minority that obsesses politicians, the media and the police.

The purpose of the debate is to draw attention to a specific and growing problem, which originates through and in the activities of that minority. In recent months, I have accumulated a disturbing amount of evidence that shows that the image of the English football supporter as a thug is leading to police forces in Europe believing that all travelling supporters are a menace to public safety and that the police can thus deal with them accordingly. Such police forces adopt the attitude that the travelling English supporter left his or her civil and human rights behind on this side of the channel, and that, when they set foot on the continent, the police can declare open season on them.

In the course of my inquiries, I have collected a wide range of personal evidence from individuals and groups, many of whom I know personally, of the most appalling treatment that has been dished out to them by police forces on the continent. My evidence tonight comes essentially from Chelsea and Arsenal supporters following their respective clubs in the European cup winners cup last season.

I am fortunate because I have a lot of time at my disposal, but I do not intend unnecessarily to detain the Minister or the House. I do not apologise for giving the following evidence in some detail because we need it on the record. We need Ministers to listen and to take these matters seriously. Genuine football supporters are deeply angry and hurt that no one seems to want to listen to their problems or deal with their complaints. They feel that they are perhaps being treated on this side of the channel almost as they are being treated on the other side. The media are very interested when there is violence, but are not interested when it is perpetrated against English citizens abroad.

First, I shall give some details and make some broad general comments that were common to most of the letters that my office has received or that were forwarded to me by supporters and from Arsenal and Chelsea clubs. The first comments relate to the match on 28 February between Club Bruges and Chelsea in Bruges—I was at that match.

Up to 500 Chelsea supporters were herded into a warehouse outside the city in a Belgian police operation before the match. Fans were handcuffed and forced into riot vehicles, with the majority of them seemingly committing the crime of speaking with an English accent. In this giant warehouse, the fans were pushed into huge, purpose-built pens, handcuffed, sprayed with water cannons and offered no food or drink for the next nine hours. At 5 am the following morning, the inmates were deported in handcuffs.

Imagine the rightful outrage there would have been in this country, if the British police had handled visiting foreign supporters in such a way. We would have been right to criticise, but, as the police have told me in discussions, they would not have dreamt of behaving in such a fashion.

One of the letters relating to the warehouse incident comes from Mr. Wheeler of Earlsfield, London SW18, who organised a trip to Bruges for 28 business executives. Nine members of the party—none was wearing Chelsea paraphernalia—were arrested outside the stadium about half an hour before kick-off when asked if they were English. They were thrown into a police van, and one was attacked with a baton. All the fans were told that they had been arrested because their tickets were forgeries, but all the tickets had been bought from an official source. The man who bought them is a travel agent and he knew that they were genuine, but the Belgian police were saying, "That's a forgery," and tearing them up in the supporters' faces. What could they do? The evidence had gone; there was nothing they could do.

Those business men were among the 500 Chelsea supporters taken to the warehouse on the outskirts of Bruges and held for nine hours—obviously, they all missed the match. They were not given any food or water, there were no seats, and they were forced to urinate on the spot when nature called because no facilities were provided.

Miss McDonnell of Palmers Green, London N13, witnessed camera crews following the Belgian riot police and waiting in anticipation for something to happen. She said:

> "I watched from a bar window as Belgian police hit out at people for merely walking along the street. These scenes were later shown on News at Ten and Sky News."

I was at that match and television companies that were not the slightest bit interested in football or the game went there looking for trouble. They wanted to broadcast scenes of English fans rioting on breakfast television the following morning. If one waits and provokes long enough, one will get precisely what one wants. Surely that

is not a responsible attitude for the media to take, and I am not prone to criticising the media either in the House or outside.

I heard from Mr. Hugo from London N5, whose son went to Bruges with two friends on a four-day break that coincided with the match. Two days before the match, they were in a bar when Belgian police entered, apparently shouting, "All English outside." His son and the two friends were arrested and detained without food or drink for 18 hours. They were

"paraded in front of what seemed to be a stage-managed party of press and TV crews."

They were then deported in handcuffs.

I have also received letters about the Real Zaragoza *v.* Chelsea match on 6 April. Again, I will go over the common reported occurrences in all the letters from Chelsea supporters. The police emptied the contents of fans' bags on to the floor during the search, taking batteries from cameras and discarding them in a heap on the floor—apparently, a move to stop fans using the batteries as missiles. Fans with tickets for the upper tier of the official supporters section were forced to sit in the lower tier—the section of the stadium where the trouble erupted, as I shall explain. There were seemingly motiveless attacks by Spanish police on Chelsea supporters up to three hours prior to the match.

I have heard from a number of people who were giving independent evidence, which I could cross-relate. Young fans—one was a nine-year-old—who travelled to the game with their parents, were manhandled by the Spanish police officers. One youngster had his bag, which he had just bought, ripped open and another was struck with a police baton. Subsequently, his father was beaten up by police officers as a result of his understandable reaction to the attack on his young son. I have evidence from other people who witnessed the scene and who did not know the man or his son. They wrote to me independently and I was able to compare three or four letters, all of which said precisely the same thing. There could not have been any collusion between all those people.

The organisation of seat allocation by ticket number was non-existent, with no apparent control over the situation. Fans were forced to sit in areas far away from their allocated seats, with many becoming separated. I experienced that in Bruges. I was told, "Just get over there." There was no question of the fans being segregated, or of there being any coherent plan to get them to their allocated seats. It was a disgraceful situation and it got even worse when the Chelsea supporters went to Real Zaragoza.

The general feeling among fans sitting in the lower tier, where so much trouble was shown on television, was that the police charged at them for no reason after Zaragoza scored its third goal. A minority of fans in that section then threw chairs as a response to the police charge. Afterwards, I saw independent footage of the scene and that is exactly what happened. The fans were attacked and, having retreated, in the end threw seats at the police, which gave them the reason to attack yet again. Those fans who sat still and tried to ignore and distance themselves from what was going on—Home Office evidence says that that is exactly what they should do—were then attacked by the police officers as they ran through to get at those throwing the seats, who were provoked into taking that rather irresponsible attitude. Of course, it is easy to say now that one should never be provoked, but unfortunately at the time it was advice that was not easily followed.

The police were undoubtedly attacking innocent fans, who were simply trying to ignore or get away from the situation. The Spanish police prevented official Chelsea stewards from entering the lower tier to calm the situation. After the match, two fans were brutally attacked by the police when querying where their coaches were situated.

Those general comments were in a range of letters. On the specific points, Mr. Germaine from Harold Hill in Romford travelled with his wife and three children on official supporters club tickets on the "Green flight". He had tickets to the top tier in the Chelsea section with the official party, but was forced by the police into the lower tier that I just described. He was hit with police batons nine times, while he sat with his family in the stand, trying to ignore what was going on. He decided to leave the stadium to protect the safety of his family, but was again attacked when leaving by the Spanish police. The incident has brought great distress to his wife and his young children.

Mr. Williams from Lancing in West Sussex—a company director who travelled with the official club trip—was attacked by Spanish police as he went into a refreshment bar at the back of the lower tier just after half time. He was hit with batons and suffered severe bruising to his legs. He said:

"I was a lone figure posing no threat to anyone."

W. E. Fowler from Stanwell in Middlesex, a Chelsea football club steward on the trip, claims that the Chelsea stewards in the upper tier were prevented by the police from going into the lower tier to calm the violence.

Mr. Ragot of Westbere road NW2, said that, on returning to his seat in the lower tier of the Chelsea section after visiting the lavatory, he was attacked by police with batons and ejected. While pleading with police outside the stadium that his jacket and passport were still on his seat, he was hit on the back of the head by a policeman on horseback and knocked unconscious. He had to go to Zaragoza hospital to receive treatment for his injury.

Mr. Bargery of Slough in Berkshire witnessed a missile thrown from the Spanish section of the crowd on to the lower tier of Chelsea supporters. As they complained, the police became angry and started

"clubbing any and everyone they felt fit to."

Mr. Hedley from Cambridge street, Pimlico and his two friends received a severe beating from Spanish police outside the stadium before the game. Consequently, they missed most of the first half of the match. Mr. Hedley needed medical treatment for his injuries and his two friends were very badly bruised around their backs and legs. A friend travelling with Mr. Dibble from Worcester Park saw a young boy hit with a baton outside the stadium before kick-off. The young boy's father obviously became upset with the policeman and he was beaten up by a group of Spanish police officers as a consequence of his reaction. As I have already mentioned, that case has been cross-referenced.

Mr. O'Rourke from Wembley in Middlesex had a ticket for the upper tier with the official party but was forced by the police to sit in the lower tier. Many people tried to sit in their allocated seats but were forced into the lower tier, where the trouble occurred. As the trouble erupted, Mr.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

O'Rourke was attacked by two police officers while sitting in his seat. He lost his glasses and suffered bruising to his shoulders and legs.

Mr. Harrison from Lower Bourne, Farnham, paid more than £300 for himself and a friend to watch the match. He said that they witnessed good-humoured Chelsea fans attacked by police outside a bar three hours prior to the game. Mr. Harrison also had a ticket for the upper tier. He was told by the Spanish authorities that he could sit anywhere that he liked and he decided to sit in the less-crowded lower tier. That was a mistake on his part. As the trouble erupted, he stayed in his seat, only to be attacked by two policemen. He suffered bruising to his kidneys and back. He and his friend decided to leave the match early for their own safety. These people paid good money to go to that match. They wanted to see football, they wanted to enjoy Zaragoza and have good time. They did not and they came home very bitter indeed.

Mr. Goodwin of Walton-on-the-Hill, Tadworth—not a place one associates with hooligans—had a ticket for the upper tier but was told by Spanish police that it was impossible for him to sit there. The entire contents of his bag were emptied on to the floor during a police search procedure. He said:

"For the first time in my life I was frightened for my own safety and attempted to leave the lower tier through the sole available exit. Upon doing so I was confronted by more Spanish police who, rather than assist in pacifying a situation, seemed intent on inflaming it by further liberally indiscriminate use of their batons.

They refused to let anybody leave, and anyone who did manage to evade them and reach the concourse ran the risk of further beatings.

I feel sure that it was solely due to my knowledge of the Spanish language that I was struck only twice before finding comparative safety in a toilet cubicle. I feel fortunate, unlike two other innocents who I saw left lying in pools of blood in the concourse. I and these others were not mindless right wing thugs, merely Chelsea supporters fleeing for our own safety."

Mr. Kyte, a senior manager for London Transport, and his brother paid £235 for the trip and travelled with the official club party. They saw only 25 minutes of the game because of a police attack on them while they sat in the lower tier of the Chelsea section. His brother had to go to hospital in England suffering from severe concussion after having bad head pains and sickness on the return journey.

Mr. Robinson, a solicitor and secretary of the Diadora football league, said that many of the fans in the lower tier where the trouble erupted were sitting in their seats holding their hands up in an obvious sign of peaceful intention. Many of those fans, however, were still struck by passing police officers. He also commented that alcohol was freely on sale inside the stadium during the match, which is in direct contravention of FIFA regulations, about which I shall say more shortly.

Mr. Steve Frankham, a Conservative voter, is a personal friend of mine. I do not normally confess to having Conservative voters as personal friends. He is a quantity surveyor and a very successful business man. He witnessed two young Chelsea fans being brutally attacked by Spanish police and saw blows inflicted to their faces, legs and backs. He said that the fans were knocked to the ground by the sheer force of the blows. The two were merely asking the police for directions to their coach.

Miss McDonnell of Palmers Green has not missed a home or away game for 17 years. Well done, Miss McDonnell! She witnessed a fan knocked unconscious by police while standing next to a refreshment kiosk in the stadium. The gentlemen had to receive mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Inside the stadium, Mr. Thompson from Wokingham witnessed a young Chelsea supporter being beaten by a group of police officers as he tried to retrieve a packet a crisps that he dropped down a flight of stairs. Steve Frankham also saw that incident and told me about it.

Let us turn to general comments about the Sampdoria *v.* Arsenal match in Genoa on 20 April. Six coaches full of Arsenal supporters were escorted by Italian riot police from Genoa airport to a large car park just outside the city. The coaches were forced to stay in the car park for six hours from 1100 to 1700 hours. At the site there were only basic refreshments and WC facilities available. Many of the supporters were due to have a three-course meal in Genoa as part of their travel package. The supporters were travelling to enjoy a good time, which is what I like doing when I travel to Chelsea away matches. None of that happened because the coaches were taken straight to the stadium by riot police and escorted directly back to Genoa airport after the match finished. I have heard a number of complaints about people taking their families for what would have been a good night out. It turned out to be a nightmare.

I have a number of commonly reported occurrences from Arsenal supporters about the Arsenal *v.* Real Zaragoza match at Parc des Princes on 10 May in Paris. They described the failure of French police to help Arsenal supporters obtain easy access to the ground and easy departure from it and said that alcohol was sold inside the stadium. Again, that was an infringement of FIFA regulations. There was an apparent lack of Arsenal FC and French stewards inside the stadium. The clubs are responsible for such matters. They must send more of their own stewards to the matches. What is more, when possible, those stewards should be bilingual. CS gas was sprayed at Arsenal fans inside the stadium after the match.

Questions were raised about safety and access to the stadium. A lack of turnstiles caused a crush of supporters at the entrance. Again, such matters are covered by FIFA regulations on safety in stadiums. We must ask whether the Parc des Princes is an acceptable venue for World cup matches. When I talked to police officers in this country, one of the complaints that they made was about the appalling facilities in a number of such stadiums. We are often seduced into thinking that all stadiums on the continent are wonderful palaces of facilities for spectators. That is not true in many respects. They do not have the facilities to segregate supporters like we have in this country.

The following are some of the letters that I received concerning the Arsenal *v.* Zaragoza match. The brother of Mrs. Jeans of Lissenden gardens in London NW5 attended the match. As he was returning to his coach after the match, he was attacked by a French police officer. Apparently, he was walking too slowly. He suffered bruising to his legs. A family friend of Mrs. Jeans also attended the match and reported that Arsenal supporters were locked in the stadium for 35 minutes after the end of the match, which is not unusual.

Anyone who has travelled with away supporters realises just how appallingly—sometimes—they are treated. In this country, the police do not attack, but supporters are often kept standing, kept waiting, are escorted and rushed from the station to the ground and

never allowed to act in a civilised fashion. Frankly, if one starts acting in a brutal fashion towards people, one should not be over-surprised if the response is similar. I am more surprised at the way in which people do not react. Certainly, when people act brutally towards me, I get exceedingly angry and aggressive indeed. I do not attack anyone, other than verbally, but I am certainly incredibly frustrated and angry by such treatment.

To return to the comments about the Zaragoza match, the fans were kept inside the ground for 35 minutes, which is not unusual. But some of the fans were then sprayed with CS gas by the French police. I assume that it was the French riot police, the CRS. The French police are not noted for being especially delicate in their handling of individuals. That was no way for English citizens to be treated in Paris. Many women and children were in that section of the stadium and were scared and bemused by the events that I have just described.

French police in riot uniform refused to help or give any directions to Mrs. Gray of Highbury, London N5 who was trying to go to her hotel after the match. In her letter, she also queried safety in the stadium. She said that chaos was caused in the access areas to the stadium, where an apparent lack of turnstiles to filter supporters entering the ground caused a bottleneck. Mr. Barford of Enfield in Middlesex noticed the lack of Arsenal stewards in the stadium and identified safety problems such as the small access area to the ground causing a crush of fans, as already described.

Mr. Martin of Hertford discovered confusion among Arsenal supporters who were trying to find their seats in the stadium, due to lack of stewards. He was also concerned about alcohol being sold inside the stadium. Mr. Nelson of Hornsey road, London N7 went to the match with his 13-year-old son; a proper and fitting thing for a father and son to do. After the match, the section of the stadium where he was sitting was locked. After a short while, a minority of the Arsenal supporters became impatient, as I have described, and, as a result, the French police fired CS gas into the crowd, causing great distress among fans in that section, many of them women and children. Mr. Nelson's son was affected badly by the gas. He was temporarily blinded and, being an asthma sufferer, he had extreme difficulties in breathing.

That is the evidence; I could have gone on a lot longer. The evidence is there and I have extracted the bare bones to give a taste to the House. Following the evidence I received, I wrote to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, with whom I also raised the matter directly, about the treatment of British citizens. The response from the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary can only be described as pathetic.

The Prime Minister is, of course, a fellow Chelsea supporter, although of less vintage than me. I was there for all Chelsea's championship matches in 1954-55; it is difficult to forget Chelsea's championship year because it is the only one we have had. The Prime Minister has told me that he started to support Chelsea the following season. I was beginning to get rather worried because we have many similarities. We both come from Brixton, we were both on Lambeth council and we are both Chelsea supporters and Surrey supporters. I took great consolation from finding that he stood at the opposite end of Stamford Bridge. Clearly, the divisions were evident even then.

This fellow Chelsea supporter and Prime Minister, for the time being, wrote a letter which I found totally unacceptable. He said that he shared my concern about

"those who masquerade as supporters"

and who cause trouble. I condemn them unequivocally. However, he then said:

"I cannot comment on the circumstances of individual incidents, but I do know that where disorder occurs at football matches, both here and abroad, innocent people can be caught up in the measures taken to deal with it."

And some. The letter continued:

"Although . . . it will be of little comfort to those concerned, I would stress that the real responsibility for what occurred in Spain lies squarely with those who deliberately set out to create mayhem instead of watching football."

Absolute nonsense.

Who briefed the Prime Minister? From where did he get that impression? All the evidence is to the contrary, yet the Prime Minister wrote such a letter. If I were him—I have offered to show him the information—I would sack the person who gave me the duff information. I asked him whether he would be prepared to take evidence from the spotters—the police officers who travelled from Fulham police station to Spain with supporters—and from an officer from the football unit of the national criminal intelligence service who was there to act as an intelligence co-ordinator alongside the Spanish police. The Prime Minister said that they could not provide a full report on the actions of the Spanish police, and that it would not be right to ask them to do so.

I do not want to invoke the words of Palmerston: "Civis Romanus sum." I do not know whether Mr. Palmerston was a football supporter. Perhaps he supported the Corinthians or the Royal Engineers, although they were probably formed after his time. I know that they won cup finals in the 1870s. What Palmerston was saying was that English citizens had a right to expect their Government to defend them, and not to dismiss their justified arguments and to say, "Sorry, it is nothing to do with us. This is something that you just happened to fall foul of because the Spanish police were dealing with problems." The Spanish police were not dealing with problems; the Spanish police were creating the problems. We demand action from the Government, following Mr. Palmerston's observations.

If the Government do not want to listen to Mr. Palmerston, they should look at the front page of an old passport. I often wonder whether the words mean anything; it is clear that they do not if one is a football supporter. The passport states:

"Her Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State requests and requires in the name of Her Majesty all those whom it may concern to allow the bearer to pass freely without let or hindrance, and to afford the bearer such assistance and protection as may be necessary."

That is just words—just a load of old garbage. If people wave that at a Spanish policeman, a French policeman or a Belgian policeman, the police will crack their heads open. So much for the power of the British passport which once, as they used to say, caused Johnny Foreigner to fall to his knees. I do not, of course, expect that sort of attitude. I am not some kind of neo-imperialist. All I am is someone who says that English citizens travelling abroad have a right to be protected from brutality wherever it comes from and that the British Government have a responsibility to protect them.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

The letter from the Home Secretary was essentially couched in the language used in the letter I received from the Prime Minister. Obviously, they had cross-checked. It was an inadequate response.

May I make some positive proposals to the Minister? I realise that he is a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister and that many of my proposals affect the responsibilities of his colleagues in the Department of National Heritage and the Home Office. As in the debate I had 10 years ago, I want to be as constructive as I can be—*[Interruption.]* You will be glad to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my drink is not alcohol.

First, to deal with some of the activities, we should ban the carrying of Union or national flags that are adulterated with the names of clubs or towns. These days, the Union flag so often has the name of a club or the name of a town across it. The flag is supposed to be a unifying and not a divisive symbol. Was what I just did—taking a drink—in order, Mr. Deputy Speaker? If I did it again, I should not like to find myself falling foul of you.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): The tradition of the House is that hon. Members should come here fully watered and victualled before they make their speeches. I hope that hon. Members will maintain that tradition. Those who suddenly get a frog in their throat may, of course, briefly take water to keep them going. To help the hon. Gentleman, I suggest that a degree of calmness in presentation means that the voice will last longer.

Mr. Banks: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would never want to fall foul of you intentionally. I was wondering what on earth, if hon. Members have to come in here watered and victualled, those two decanters were doing sitting on the Front Bench. Obviously there is one rule for Back Benchers and another rule for Front Benchers.

The second point—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman will have observed that Front Benchers get a little more excited than Back Benchers do.

Mr. Banks: I often find that excitement makes the juices flow more readily than does the more staid approach. I am, however, grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for clarifying the situation.

Banning the carrying of Union or national flags adulterated with the names of clubs would be something. I have called for it before and I think that action should be taken. It is offensive to people to see such flags. The flag then becomes a divisive rather than a unifying symbol.

Secondly, we should cease the practice of playing national anthems before football matches. No other sport does this. I cannot understand why this happens in football matches when it does not happen before cricket matches or rugby matches.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): It does sometimes.

Mr. Banks: I do not recall anyone playing the national anthem before a cricket match. Was the national anthem played up in Leeds before the start of the test match against the West Indies today?

Mr. Baldry: I do not know whether the West Indies has a national anthem.

Mr. Banks: The Minister's comment is interesting. What about Australia, then, or New Zealand? The Minister knows that the national anthem is not played at cricket matches. Why is it played at football matches? This is not an attempt to get at the national anthem, but a suggestion. Rival supporters whistling and jeering the respective anthems does not get the match off to a very good start. Again, as you can see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am getting over-excited.

Thirdly, there should be a crackdown on the sale of tee-shirts, leaflets and badges—all the rubbish that is sold outside grounds—that carry racist slogans. In August 1991, the Government announced with a great flurry of publicity that running on to the pitch and chanting indecent or racist slogans would be criminal offences. How many arrests have we had for those offences since 1991? It is not good enough to pass new laws. We need to ensure that they are properly and adequately enforced.

Fourthly, English clubs must insist that FIFA enforces its own rules and the European convention on spectator violence and misbehaviour. When I go to matches in which we are playing an overseas club, the no-drinks rule is enforced rigidly, from the directors right the way through. The continental clubs are ignoring the rules on the sale of alcohol. Again, we start to ask why we should follow the rules when the others do not. We should follow the rules, and, more to the point, so should they. Frankly, that is something that the Minister should raise through the Foreign Office and other agencies.

Fifthly, part II of the Football Spectators Act 1989 gave the courts the power to make restriction orders to prevent convicted hooligans from travelling to key football matches outside England and Wales. Statistics obtained through the answers to parliamentary questions show that only seven such orders were made between 1991 and 1994. That is a joke. How can Ministers expect us to take those regulations and rules seriously if they are not being adequately enforced?

Sixthly, we must seek changes in the legislation to allow those who cause trouble abroad to be prosecuted in the English courts. I know that this introduces a new concept, but it is about time it was seriously examined. We must also encourage authorities on the continent to prosecute those who are responsible for causing trouble within their jurisdictions.

It is offensive to see thugs—I am talking about genuine thugs who are properly arrested, not the innocent people whom I was describing earlier—getting back to Heathrow or leaving a ferry and giving the television cameras V-signs and fascist salutes, cocking a snook at authority in this country. It sends the wrong message altogether and is extremely offensive.

Seventhly, I would like to say a word about the role of the media. They seem to be interested only in the violent minority. I have found it very difficult to get the media interested in the sort of the cases that I have been describing at length. The media do not seem to be interested in the violence perpetrated on the innocent. They hype violence and inflame the situation.

One of the complaints that was made in Zaragoza was that the local press there was reporting what the national press in this country was saying about all the hooligans who were going there. People, and the police force, in

Zaragoza became worried that a load of barbarians would turn up and trash their town. That hyped up the police, made them extremely edgy, and they overreacted. The media have to understand the impact they have when such alarmist, hyped-up, unnecessary stories are conveyed to the country that is about to receive the visiting supporters.

I come to the most important part of my contribution. The role of the national football intelligence unit is crucial. It must be given the resources to extend its work. I have been talking to people involved and it is amazing that there is only a handful of officers—six or seven—in the NFIU. I had thought that there were loads.

In the Metropolitan police area, those officers are complemented by an officer in each police division in which there is a football club. I presume that that applies throughout the country. Even if one takes account of the 92 football clubs in the English leagues, that does not amount to a great number of officers to deal with a crucial public concern. It is no good politicians getting worried and making statements about what is going on and the media reporting and amplifying these events in great depth if we do not give the police the resources that they need to deal with the matter.

Each police force has its own spotters who go to club matches, but they are junior officers, constables. No more than two local officers, senior though they may be, go over to liaise with their counterparts on the continent before a match. They can go only by invitation. I mentioned the Spanish, the Belgians and the Italians, none of whom have the equivalent of our NFIU. Only the Dutch, who have a similar problem with football hooligans, have such a unit.

It is incumbent on Ministers to take some initiatives. First, the NFIU must receive more resources if, as politicians, we are going to complain about football violence and the behaviour of football supporters at home and abroad.

Secondly, Ministers should ask their European counterparts to allow police officers from continental countries to come to Britain for training in football crowd control techniques. Our police officers are probably now the best in the world at football crowd control. No doubt we all regret that they had to acquire that expertise, but at least they have it, and it should be shared among their continent counterparts.

We must send far more police officers to matches abroad to accompany supporters. Wherever possible, the officers should be bilingual—people who can get involved in what is going on, not to dictate to police forces abroad but to assist them to ensure that some of the problems that I have described do not recur.

We should also send police officers in uniform. I know that this is not customary, but I have checked the matter out and there do not seem to be any great obstacles standing in the way of that. It would comfort and perhaps control English travelling supporters to see English police officers in uniform with them. It would have been reassuring, certainly, for those innocent parties that I described earlier if they could have gone to an English police officer and made their complaints rather than suffering in the way that they did.

There is an understandable lack of expertise among European police forces. They have not been forced to acquire the detailed expertise that, regrettably, we have had to. Because they lack expertise, they tend to compensate by relying on policing in numbers. That, in turn, creates problems of intimidation and confusion. To be confronted by massed ranks of police officers when you travel to a match is not a very comfortable position.

One of the other difficulties experienced by NFIU officers is that the police forces with which they liaise prior to matches are often not the police who end up policing the crowd. That is hardly useful.

In the end, essentially, we in this country are the problem, so we should be prepared to contribute far more to the control and resolution of the problem. The Government must take the situation seriously.

The responsible Ministers,—I wrote directly to the Prime Minister—should be prepared to call for reports on the matters that I have raised tonight. They should call for evidence from those few police officers who were at the matches I have detailed and from our embassy and consulate staff who would have been at them.

I expect the Government to do far more than that. On behalf of the large numbers of decent football supporters who travel abroad, I expect—indeed, I demand—that the British Government defend their rights and correct the wrongs experienced by those British citizens travelling abroad. Those football supporters, those English citizens, have a right to expect action from the Government, and the Government have a duty to respond.

7.47 pm

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): I will add only a few words. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) on obtaining the debate and on being so clever as to get it on a night when we can go on a little longer.

My hon. Friend made an excellent speech, which has covered a lot of the issues that I wanted to raise. I accept that the Minister may not be able to deal tonight with some of the points that my hon. Friend has raised, and the questions that need to be answered, because it is clear that many of the things which have gone wrong in term of co-ordination and responsibility come under the aegis of the Department of National Heritage, although I am sure that the Minister will have co-ordinated with that Department.

I speak on behalf of the many Arsenal supporters who wrote to me, and I know that many have also written to my hon. Friend. The evidence that my hon. Friend gave about the match in Paris and about the other matches is very clear and we have all seen it. Some of us have also seen that my hon. Friend has a large file on the matter. What have the Government done? This situation has not just arisen—it has been going on for some months. Did any Minister at any state write even one letter or make one telephone call to protest or ask for an explanation from the French authorities, the Spanish authorities or those in any of the other countries where incidents occurred? If not, why not?

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West is right. Can one think of any other circumstances in which large numbers of people from another European country would be treated in such a way here without it being front page news and roundly condemned? It seems that the Government are not prepared to stand up for English—in this case, they were English—citizens abroad who have clearly been treated deplorably.

[Miss Kate Hoey]

It is not good enough for the Government to say that there are diplomatic reasons for not responding, or that there are bad supporters. We know that there are bad supporters, and it is precisely because we want to isolate them that we need to stand up for the genuinely good supporters who did nothing but spend large sums of money and take time off work to enjoy a football match.

I have here evidence to back up everything that my hon. Friend said. One letter relates specifically to the European cup winners' cup final in Paris. My hon. Friend mentioned the state of the ground. I appreciate that it is not really a matter for the Minister tonight, but the football authorities need to be asked why the ground in Paris—the Parc des Princes—was allowed to be used. The available evidence shows that it was not fit even to host a normal match, let alone the final of a major tournament.

I received a detailed letter from Mr. Barford who lives in Enfield. He also wrote to Arsenal and to my hon. Friend. It outlines the way in which fans were treated on the way into the match. Even when they were not being treated badly, the route to the ground calls into question every FIFA rule. It appears that the roads leading to the ground were cordoned off with crash barriers and there was only a very small access area, which meant that people were crushed together. Mr. Barford's letter states:

"This was further compounded by ticket holders having to fight their way back through the crowd if they were trying to go down the wrong road and were told to go elsewhere."

Everything points to a lack of clarity about who was taking the decisions at the ground and who was responsible for it. Our football authorities owe it to the people who matter—the supporters—to ask FIFA why the ground, which was clearly not fit to host a major match, was used. At the same match, fans had to go through a small opening in the fence and there was more crushing. Mr. Barford said:

"I find it hard to believe that a stadium that hosts international matches does not have any turnstiles, a basic requirement that even non-league football clubs in this country have to have."

Once inside the stadium, there were problems with the stewarding. Many Arsenal stewards travelled with the fans, but were not always in evidence at the ground. There is some uncertainty as to why that happened. It was not because the stewards disappeared to have a nice time watching the match; there seems to have been a lack of understanding about where they were allowed to go and what they were allowed to do. I am sure that the same has happened elsewhere. The final result was that people were unable to find their seats. They were told to sit where they liked, which led to disagreements. The length of time that fans had to stay in the ground after the match also caused a problem.

All that happened to fans of a club which has no history of football hooligans attaching themselves to it. Indeed, the previous year Arsenal was awarded a fair play award for its supporters' behaviour in Europe. Mr. Barford concludes:

"I would not attend another football match at this ground",

and says that he would be very hesitant about attending another match in Europe at all. It is sad that many such letters are from people who were travelling to Europe for the first time and who now will never go back.

What do those incidents tell us? The Government are supposed to be interested in bringing the people of Europe together, but for many young people, their first trip abroad to watch a match was ruined and they will not return. We need some answers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West mentioned the football intelligence unit. How it works is crucial, but there were questions about how it co-operated with the Dublin authorities during England's match there. I know that we are debating matches in Europe, but the Republic of Ireland is also part of Europe. I understood that the Minister with responsibility for sport was meant to co-ordinate the work of the Home Office and the Foreign Office with reference to our supporters travelling to international matches. I asked him whether he had had any discussions with the Dublin authorities the week before the match. He did not even pick up the phone to speak to the sports Minister in Dublin and ask how things were going. There had been no communication. That is scandalous.

We must remember that we are hosting the European championships next year, and many people will be coming. I hope that our hooligan minority will not be stirred up, and that our well-behaved supporters will not try to make up for the way they were treated by taking out their frustration on supporters from Europe. Football supporters matter, and football matters, but it is also important for the credibility of this country that we host the championships properly next year.

The World cup will be held in France in 1998 and, as my hon. Friend said, many people will be worried if England qualifies, as we hope that it will. They will be worried about going to watch England play in France if great attention is not paid to assisting our fans abroad. As Members of Parliament, we have to stand up for supporters who are going about the legitimate activity of watching a match abroad. We cannot put the matter aside and say that good supporters have to lumped together with the bad and receive the same treatment. It is not good enough to pass the buck.

I am afraid that the football authorities will say that the problem is a matter for the Government and the Foreign Office, and the Home Office will say that it is a matter for the Department of National Heritage. It is important that someone in Government gets a grip on this serious issue, which will not go away. The Minister must respond quickly to the evidence presented by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West and the response must show that the Government are prepared to stand up for English citizens abroad.

7.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): This has been a useful debate. I do not wish to belittle any of the concerns raised by the hon. Members for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) or for Vauxhall (Miss Hoey), but the problem is that the hon. Gentleman's main contention was that police forces across Europe felt that it was fair game and open season to attack English fans because of their reputation.

Last season, according to my calculations, English clubs played some 17 matches in Europe. One or two of those 17 matches could have been extremely difficult, such as the Galatasaray match. We are concentrating on

three out of the 17. I do not want in any way to belittle the difficulties that may have arisen at those matches, but it is perfectly possible for English clubs to play in Europe with large numbers of English fans supporting and spectating, with no difficulties whatever. The idea that somehow police forces overseas see English fans as fair game, and that it is not possible for English fans to attend matches in Europe without getting into difficulties is not borne out by facts.

There is another difficulty, but again I do not want to belittle anything that the hon. Gentleman said. He read letters from a lot of people who had written to him regarding the three matches. Following those three matches—I have checked this carefully with officials from the Foreign Office, the Home Office and elsewhere within the Government—no football organisation or supporters organisation made any representations to us, either formally or informally.

I suspect that the attitude of many was summed up by Monica Hartman, the deputy chairman of the Federation of Football Supporters Clubs, who—after the match in Bruges—commented:

"It is no good anybody trying to make excuses for these people who fell foul of the authorities in Bruges . . . I just hope that the actions of the Belgian police sends a message around the world to those other security forces who have been so lenient with the louts in the past. Some of them are not even house-trained let alone fit to be travelling abroad representing our country . . . They think that wherever they go they will strike fear into people.

Well this time they were up against a police force who remember Heysel and the terrible loss of life caused by hooliganism in their capital city . . . I applaud the way the Belgian police rounded them up and locked them away in community centres. What else did they deserve if they entered the country without tickets?"

In relation to this year's football season, we have not had representations from any of the official supporters clubs or the Football Association. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that, if concerns had been raised either by embassy staff who attended the matches or by the police—the hon. Gentleman knows that the UK police are present at all such matches—they would have been fully investigated. I have to say that concerns about the three matches were not raised either by consular staff or by the police.

Mr. Tony Banks: Does not the Minister understand that he is identifying the problem? The fact is that the fans are getting so used to such treatment that they are not complaining. I am articulating—aggressively, perhaps—the frustration and anger that supporters feel. They believe that no one is interested, and that there is no point in complaining because all they will get is a stunningly complacent response from the Minister. I mentioned only a few matches, but I can give the Minister evidence from other matches.

Mr. Baldry: There is nothing complacent about my response whatever. The hon. Gentleman and the hon. Lady raised concerns about specific matches. One would have thought that if the clubs or the associations that represent supporters had real concerns about the way in which matches were policed, they would certainly have gone to the Home Office or to ourselves to talk them through. The idea that the representatives of football in this country are not prepared to talk to the Home Office or the Foreign Office about their concerns is just unreasonable.

One accepts that the vast majority of supporters who go abroad have not been implicated in any of these events. The hon. Gentleman read out a litany of concerns from football spectators who felt that they had been treated unfairly by the police authorities in relation to the three matches. But it is also important to recognise the coverage following the Zaragoza *v.* Chelsea match. The *Daily Star* reported:

"Chelsea's hooligan element shamed English soccer once again with a sickening charge on Spanish riot police.

Mindless thugs threw seats, coins and anything they could lay their hands on as they fought a pitched battle."

Today said:

"Hundreds of Chelsea fans heaped more shame on English football with another display of mindless violence last night.

Thugs went on the rampage after their team went 3-0 down in the European Cup-Winners' Cup semi final in Spain against Real Zaragoza.

They ripped up plastic seats and hurled them at the police, who responded with a series of baton-wielding charges . . . trouble exploded in the section especially reserved for Chelsea fans. Again it was a mindless few who disgraced the club's name, just as they had in Belgium when they faced Bruges."

Miss Hoey: Is the Minister saying that because some mindless hooligans behave in a way that we all condemn, that justifies many people being treated in the way described by my hon. Friend?

Mr. Baldry: I do not accept that large numbers of people were brutalised in the way suggested by the hon. Gentleman.

In relation to the Arsenal match in Genoa against Sampdoria, some concerns were raised about people being detained in a car park for several hours. We received eight letters of complaint about that match. One cannot discuss the three matches that have been raised this evening as if they were instances of police forces suddenly deciding to beat up a few English fans. That is the way in which they have been presented this evening.

What happened in three out of 17 matches this season—by any interpretation—was that a significant number of mindless thugs, who were, sadly, English, started to attack the police and other fans. Their actions resulted in a public order disturbance. When the police are trying to sort out large numbers of people misbehaving and causing violence late at night, I am afraid that occasionally some innocent people may get caught up in that. But it is neither fair nor reasonable to attack the police in those circumstances, as the hon. Gentleman has done, by asserting that they have gone on a bloodlust hunt and were simply seeking out English fans because they spoke English. The facts do not bear that out.

Mr. Tony Banks: The facts do bear it out. I do not know how much the Minister knows about football, nor do I know how many matches he has been to, either in this country or abroad. He is reading from a brief that has been prepared by someone who does not know anything about what happened at those matches. I have concentrated on those matches specifically because I thought that I would get only a short time to discuss the subject. I could refer to a range of other matches.

I suggest that the Minister speaks to his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Putney (Mr. Mellor) about the experiences of some Manchester United supporters in Turkey. He should talk to hon. Members from Liverpool about the experiences that people from that area have had.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

I have a track record in this area, as I proved 10 years ago. The Minister should be listening, and not just reading out second or third-hand stuff from journalists who frankly did not understand what was happening.

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Gentleman is being selective if he chooses to ignore all that was written by the reporters and those who attended those matches. He should reflect on the fact that, if events occurred as he suggested, it is surprising that none of the journalists, English sports writers and those who attended the matches chose to comment on it. I do not belittle or dismiss the concerns that he raised, but he has been selective in his interpretation of the facts. The facts that he and the hon. Lady put forward do not support the contention that police forces throughout Europe are picking on English fans. It is perfectly possible for English fans to go to Europe and watch football matches peacefully.

We all share a common interest in and are committed to stamping out football hooliganism. Before every European match, officials from the Home Office, the Foreign Office and other Departments get together to see how it will be possible to minimise the difficulties that might occur. We in the Foreign Office seek to ensure that every party is kept in touch because, as the debate has made clear, a number of different Government organisations are involved. The Home Office is responsible for security and public order. It leads on issues arising from football hooliganism. The Department of National Heritage also has an interest in football policy, more broadly. The Football Unit of the National Criminal Intelligence Service collates police intelligence on persistent hooligans. It exchanges intelligence with foreign forces and plays a key role in identifying the troublemakers. Security advisers from the football associations and club officials are also directly involved in the pre-planning stage.

The Foreign Office seeks to ensure that all those parties are in touch to help with arrangements on the ground and, most importantly, to help British nationals who get into trouble. Consular staff at our posts abroad are well placed for that task. They are intent on responding and being available if there is a breakdown in public order surrounding a football match.

Miss Hoey: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: I shall give way to the hon. Lady in a moment.

Miss Hoey: The Minister has plenty of time to do so.

Mr. Baldry: I know.

In her speech, the hon. Lady's hypothesis was to concentrate on two matches and suggest that those examples proved that every time English spectators went abroad, they would be attacked by European police and nothing would be done to help them. The facts do not support that contention, and it is important that the House understands some of the facts.

Our consular staff know the local system and the language. Honorary consuls are often also involved. Those staff are involved right from the start in preparation and planning before a match. The level of staffing at a particular venue, and their deployment, is carefully worked out beforehand in consultation with local police. Their aim is to be able to react quickly to calls for help from those arrested, injured, or otherwise distressed. They need to know in advance whether ticketless fans are to be detained away from the match.

One of the problems about a number of those matches is the number of people who turn up at the grounds without tickets. The consular staff need to know in which hospitals injured fans will be treated; where the troublemakers will be held; and how expulsion and deportation will be handled. When large numbers of fans are known to be travelling, not only consular staff are involved. The entire embassy staff and others will be deployed in and around the ground and at other relevant venues.

We wish to play a substantial part in countering football hooliganism, and will continue to do so. We have agreed this evening that it is not a problem for Government alone. The football authorities, clubs and the fans themselves must take a stand against those who cause trouble. Obviously, we try to prevent football hooligans from travelling to matches abroad. As the hon. Gentleman said, courts have the power to impose restriction orders, which means that those convicted of football-related offences can be prevented from attending key matches. That applies to matches in the United Kingdom and abroad. Those subject to restriction orders must report to a police station while the match is taking place.

As the hon. Gentleman said—his figures were slightly wrong—so far, only 26 restriction orders have been made. It is a reasonable inference that, given the small number of restriction orders that have been made, that scheme is not working as well as we would have wished. We are therefore considering ways in which it may be made more effective. The Home Office is reminding the courts and other interested parties of those powers. If we know the troublemakers, it may be sensible to impose restriction orders on them.

Last season was not one of which anyone can be altogether proud. Sadly, there was a resurgence of violence on and off the pitch in the UK. It sometimes seemed likely that that rather unpleasant aspect of football might be an export item. We were acutely aware that there were six English teams involved in the three major European competitions this season.

In the European Champions cup, Manchester United played in three matches. The game against Galatasaray in Istanbul in September last year had the potential to be the most difficult. The House will recall that it followed a previous encounter there, when six English fans were detained and some 180 were deported without seeing the game. The lessons of the past had been learned. There was close liaison between the clubs, police, UEFA and consular staff. We sent an official from the Consular Department in the Foreign Office to help, and that game went off perfectly peacefully. Directors of the club and Greater Manchester police were grateful for our contribution to the end result.

The Manchester United-Galatasaray game in Istanbul, which started off the season last September, proves that it is possible for English teams to play in Europe and not get into difficulties. The same applies to the three English clubs represented in the UEFA cup. Fans from Newcastle United, Blackburn Rovers and Aston Villa travelled to Holland, Spain, Sweden, Italy and Turkey and there was no trouble at any of those matches. Indeed, the citizens of Bilbao paid tribute to the behaviour of Newcastle United

supporters. So one must also ask why the Spanish police did not have to intervene on that occasion, and one can only conclude that they were not provoked as they were at Zaragoza. That means that the only difficulties resulted from the matches played in the European cup winners' cup, and we have gone into those in considerable detail.

Miss Hoey: Is the Minister suggesting that the Arsenal supporters behaved badly at the final in Paris and that no trouble was caused by the Newcastle supporters in some of their matches?

Mr. Baldry: What I am saying to the hon. Lady is that the facts do not support the contention that French police suddenly decided to pick on or attack English supporters and spectators simply because they were English. I have made it clear this evening that it is perfectly possible—indeed, it frequently happens—for English clubs to go and watch matches in Europe with no difficulties whatever.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No; I will not give way again.

I accept without question that the vast majority of the football-watching public are innocent fans showing support for their chosen team. Of course I have sympathy with the resentment that they must feel about being regarded in the same light as thugs who are intent on causing trouble. Of course I deplore the inevitable occasions when any innocent fan is caught up in efforts to control troublemakers. *[Interruption.]* I say "inevitable" because we have all seen the disturbing and frightening images on our television screens. They give us only a hint of the chaos of a full-scale football riot and, in the face of a violent breakdown in law and order, decisions must be made by individual police officers in the blink of an eye. I know that no innocent supporter deserves to be harshly treated, and of course we all deplore that.

I can only suggest that genuine fans do all that they can to keep well clear of those who attend a match but have no interest in the game. That goes for football clubs, too. Experience shows that the safest way to watch a game overseas is to travel with the supporters club party and heed its advice. It may cost more than travelling independently, but costs are not always about money. Naturally, our consular staff are there, seeking to help anyone who gets into trouble.

I say to the hon. Members for Newham, North-West and for Vauxhall, who repeatedly jump up and down, that if Arsenal or Chelsea feel that they have genuine worries about the way in which the Foreign Office or the Home Office help to contribute to the organising of overseas matches, I shall be delighted to meet them. However, neither Chelsea, Arsenal nor any other football club or football organisation sought to visit Ministers to express anxieties about any aspect of the past season. That is because those clubs, I believe, recognise that the Foreign Office, the Home Office and all the other organisations involved have been, and are, working extremely hard to try to ensure that English spectators, when they go to Europe to watch matches, can have an enjoyable time, watch a match and return safely.

Mr. Tony Banks: I am trying to communicate to the Minister the fact that those people do not come to visit him and they do not complain because it is a waste of time. If I may say so, his speech is clear evidence that it would be a waste of time. He appears to have dismissed all the evidence that I have given tonight as being of no great concern because it relates to only three matches. Next time, I shall produce evidence from all the other matches as well.

It is outrageous that the Minister appears not to be prepared to accept that that evidence is genuine and that he shows no concern about what is going on. Those organisations do not come and see him because, on the evidence, it seems to be a rightful assumption that they will get short shrift from him.

Mr. Baldry: But all the football organisations are co-operating and working with the Foreign Office day in, day out, throughout the year, as are the police forces, as are the relevant organisations. It is a picture of continuing co-operation. They do not mention, and have not mentioned, the anxieties that the hon. Gentleman expressed, not because they believe that we are insensitive to them but because they recognise that co-operation takes place to ensure that English spectators may travel overseas and watch matches safely. I am saying to the hon. Gentleman that the speeches that he and the hon. Member for Vauxhall made this evening have not fairly reflected either this season or the work that is carried out by the Home Office, the Foreign Office and English clubs.

If any football organisation, football spectators organisation, football supporters organisation or football club feels that there is a scintilla of a shadow of a suggestion of truth in the proposition that both hon. Members advanced this evening—that European police forces are declaring open season on English fans—I very much hope that they will seek out Home Office and Foreign Office Ministers to talk us through that, because I shall be keen to listen to what they have to say. None of them has sought to do so, because they know, as we know, and as the House knows, that that contention simply is not true.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes past Eight o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 9 June 1995

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Drug Misuse

[Relevant document: The White Paper entitled "Tackling Drugs Together-A Strategy for England 1995-98" (Cm 2846).]

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

9.34 am

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I very much welcome the opportunity to open a full day's debate on the Government's strategy for tackling drug misuse in England, which I presented to the House, in the form of a White Paper, as recently as a month ago. I did so on behalf, not only of myself, but of the Secretaries of State for Health and for Education, the Home Secretary and the Paymaster General. I recall that, on that occasion, my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) expressed the hope that we would find time for a debate on the White Paper, and I share what I hope will be his pleasure that we have been able to do so.

I should make it clear at the outset that I play a largely co-ordinating role rather than an executive one in this regard. I was asked to chair the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Drug Misuse and it is to me that the Central Drugs Co-ordination Unit reports, but I am the conductor of the orchestra—an orchestra which plays in complete harmony—not a player.

None of us should be under any illusion about the seriousness of the drug problem that confronts us today and especially the threat that it poses to many of our young people. The evidence shows that, in any one year, at least 3 million people—about 6 per cent. of the population—take an illegal drug. Recent surveys have suggested that 28 per cent. of 16 to 29-year-olds have taken illegal drugs and that 14 per cent. of 14 to 15-year-olds admit to doing so. All the indicators—including drug seizures and the number of people found guilty of or cautioned for drug offences—have been increasing. The signs are that drug misuse in the United Kingdom and overseas has been continuing to increase.

It is little surprise perhaps that, in last year's British Crime Survey, the percentage of people who specifically expressed worry about drugs as a "big problem" increased from 12 per cent. in 1992 to 22 per cent., and that among young people themselves—16 to 19-year-olds—that figure has increased to more than 30 per cent.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): I dare say that I am anticipating my right hon. Friend, but I think it is important to place one matter on the record. I know that my right hon. Friend shares my concern about young people. Is he aware that the pressure on them to take cannabis and soft drugs, believing that there will be no after-effects, is growing, but that Professor Camps, a great and famous Home Office pathologist for many years, repeatedly said to me, as a leading schoolmaster, "Soft drugs always lead to hard drugs—always. Never let your pupils and students take soft drugs"? I never did.

Mr. Newton: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. It is precisely because of worries of that type that we have sought to place so much emphasis on that strategy and, I may say, to make it absolutely clear, as I am glad has also been made clear from the Opposition Front Bench during the response to my statement, that we have no plans whatever to legalise any drugs that are currently not legal. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

It is, I say to my hon. Friend, for that type of reason and against that background that the Government have felt it right to develop a strategic framework that recognises the seriousness and complexity of the problem and sets out a range of commitments to tackle it.

I have been extremely encouraged by the support that the White Paper has received, in the House, as reflected in the general welcome given by the hon. Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) when I made my statement, and more widely. All types of relevant organisations, many of them very distinguished, such as the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, the Association of Chief Police Officers, the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and our own all-party drug misuse group, have welcomed the White Paper and expressed their willingness—indeed keenness—to work with it.

Indeed, I noted that the director of intelligence at Scotland Yard—not, on my acquaintance with him, a man given to saying things that Ministers like to hear simply for the sake of pleasing them—is reported as having said on the radio, on the day of the White Paper's publication:

"they actually listened"—

that is us—

"to what we'd got to say and what you've seen is a great deal of hard work by the Central Drugs Co-ordinating Committee which has produced what I think is a stunning document compared with other drug strategies that have been prepared across the world. This is really the best I've ever seen and it deserves our support."

I do not know whether everyone has been that fulsome in support of the White Paper—it appears that the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) does not feel quite the same way. At any rate, it is an indication of the very positive response that the White Paper has received. That support gives us our best chance of success and it is a reflection of the extent to which the Government have sought to listen to serious, reasoned analysis and proposals during the consultation exercise which preceded the White Paper's publication. I will give way to the right hon. Gentleman—perhaps he will be as fulsome in his praise of the White Paper as I would wish.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Not quite, but I think that the right hon. Gentleman is right to refer to the many comments about the fact that the Government have listened to criticisms of the proposed structure and arrangements and responded to those criticisms. However, there is a feeling that the

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

Government did not heed advice about addressing some of the fundamental causes of the drug problem, which the White Paper does not deal with at all.

Mr. Newton: I am not sure that I wholly agree with that view. None of us can be confident that we know what the difficulties are and research to which I shall refer later reveals that dilemma. We know that we are dealing with a very complex problem and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman, who shows every sign that he intends to participate in the debate, will elaborate upon his views later.

I was particularly pleased to note the positive response from the key agencies which have the responsibility for delivering the strategy. At its annual drugs conference during the week following the White Paper's publication, the Association of Chief Police Officers demonstrated the police service's commitment to the partnership approach by involving in those discussions for the first time the full range of enforcement, education and treatment agencies concerned with tackling drugs.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for giving way. The inter-agency approach that he has mentioned is very important. Will he take the opportunity to pay great tribute to Norfolk, where the inter-agency approach has been working extremely well since 1990? I know that the local authorities there are following Government policy very actively indeed.

Mr. Newton: I am more than happy to pay tribute to my hon. Friend's county local authorities in Norfolk so long as I am also allowed to pay my own tribute to the local authorities in Essex which have also worked extremely effectively to that end.

Our task now is to ensure the implementation of the strategy whose aims are clearly set out in the statement of purpose, which is:

"To take effective action by vigorous law enforcement, accessible treatment and a new emphasis on education and prevention to:

increase the safety of communities from drug-related crime;

reduce the acceptability and availability of drugs to young people; and

reduce the health risks and other damage related to drug misuse."

Those three priorities are interdependent and of equal importance. I emphasise the fact that delivering one helps to deliver the others and, in the same way, if we were to lose ground in one area, the others would be undermined. Our efforts must be connected, concerted and sustained across the board.

Our objectives in relation to community safety and crime are: to see that the law is effectively enforced, especially against those involved in the supply and trafficking of illegal drugs; to reduce the incidence of and the public's fear of drug-related crime; and to reduce the level of drug misuse in prisons, the importance of which was rightly stressed by a number of hon. Members on both sides of the House in response to my statement of 10 May.

The White Paper not only sets out specific tasks for each of the criminal justice agencies in meeting these objectives, but requires them to work together to maximise effectiveness. For example, I attach considerable importance to the work to be undertaken by HM Customs and Excise, the police service—including regional crime squads—the Home Office and the National Criminal Intelligence Service to develop overall performance measures for law enforcement, including targets for dismantling major trafficking organisations.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): My right hon. Friend mentioned Customs and Excise. Will he confirm that we can be certain that adequate methods of border control will remain in place in Dover? We do not want the relaxation of border controls around Europe to prevent us from doing our normal checks at borders and thus allow drugs to be imported into the country illegally in lorries.

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend will be well aware that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and many of my other right hon. Friends have repeatedly made clear the British Government's determination to maintain effective controls for many reasons, including that which concerns my hon. Friend.

As to law enforcement measures, I shall refer briefly to the prison service's own drugs strategy. It requires effective working in conjunction with other relevant agencies, such as the probation service, police and a range of local agencies, in order to tackle the control, safety and treatment issues which must be addressed for those in custody and on release. We shall seek to measure their performance against key performance indicators for tackling drug-related crime, some of which are mentioned in the White Paper.

The White Paper sets out a number of objectives aimed at helping young people to resist drugs. Their span is wide because the circumstances which determine why some of our children choose to experiment with drugs, while many others—still the majority, we must not forget—do not, are contingent upon many different factors. I referred to that fact briefly in response to the intervention by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed a few moments ago.

The recent report entitled "Psychological Disorders in Young People" by Professor Sir Michael Rutter and David Smith demonstrates yet again the complexity of the social environment facing young people today. It makes clear that there are no simple answers as to which factors cause drug misuse, but it lends no support to some of the more facile suggestions about links with social and economic conditions.

However, central to our efforts must be discouraging young people—who take illegal drugs for whatever reason—from taking them in the first place; providing our schools with clear guidance on drug education and managing drug-related incidents; and developing effective publicity campaigns. Experience from the United States and elsewhere suggests that credible, focused information about the dangers of drugs can make a real impact on the attitudes of young people. If we can reduce their demand for drugs by highlighting their awareness of risk and developing their skills to resist pressures—to which my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway) referred—we shall be on the way to containing the trends. But a fine and a careful line must be drawn in highlighting those risks and dangers, without overstating

them so that they seem either totally unconnected with young people's lives or make drug taking perversely attractive.

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): My right hon. Friend is correct to draw attention to the threat that drug taking poses for young people. Is he aware of the report of the Croydon regional drug and alcohol team which said, as recently as 1 June, that children as young as six or seven may be using cannabis or pills? That suggests that drug strategies should be targeted perhaps to primary as well as secondary schools.

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's point. I was not specifically aware of that survey, but the fact that it confirms his concerns indicates the importance of the efforts that are being made in relation to drugs education. We must ensure that appropriate steps are taken throughout people's schooling. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Minister of State from the Department of Education, who will wind up the debate, will refer to that matter in his speech.

I emphasise that the Office for Standards in Education will take a key role in assessing our performance in the educational field. The hon. Member for Dewsbury raised some concerns about OFSTED's expertise in her response to the White Paper's publication. I assure the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), who is leading for the Opposition today, that a detailed and comprehensive inspection brief for this work has been agreed between OFSTED and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education. It requires all inspections to include comment on the quality of both policy and practice in drugs education at each school, as well as requiring specific studies on school provision and the contribution of the youth service to drugs prevention. Training for OFSTED inspectors in that vital area of their work is kept under regular review, and includes the provision of day conferences and regional meetings to share good practice.

But as I made clear when presenting this White Paper, young people's drug problems cannot be a matter only for schools. The White Paper's objectives and tasks in relation to reducing the susceptibility of young people to drugs stretches across the Home Office, the Department of Health and others. Work with young offenders, the homeless or children in care must all take place within a shared agenda of effective drug prevention and education.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has renewed the drug prevention initiative which works with local communities. Today, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health is announcing grants to 40 projects developing specialist services for young people at risk of drug misuse or at an early stage of experimenting with drugs. This White Paper signals a strong and enhanced emphasis on prevention and education to help young people to resist drugs. It will necessarily be a long-term process, but it is essential.

Reducing the health risks of drug misuse—the third key area of the White Paper which has an equal priority with the others—is essentially about progress on two overall objectives: first, protecting our communities from the health risks and other damage associated with drug misuse, including the spread of communicable diseases; and, secondly, discouraging people from misusing drugs, and enabling those who do so to stop.

I attach particular importance in respect of these objectives to the work currently being undertaken by the task force established in April 1994 by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health which is reviewing the effectiveness of treatment services for drug misusers. It is expected to report to Ministers in January. I hope that it will help purchasers to ensure that cost-effective and appropriate services—both from the statutory and the very important independent sectors—are accessible to those who need them. Department of Health guidance will therefore cover early intervention services, treatment, rehabilitation and aftercare services, and will include services for people serving community sentences or on release from custody.

Here again, interdependence is one of the themes. Close liaison with the relevant agencies will be the key to effective delivery. That is why the independent standing conference on drug abuse is seeking to draw together service providers across the spectrum.

Important though the overall strategy is, the direct impact of the White Paper must be at the local level if we are to make real progress. A great deal of good work has already been established in many areas, not least those which have had the benefit of the Home Office's drug prevention initiative. But the White Paper gives an added emphasis to the themes of partnership, leadership and accountability at the local level with the setting up of drug action teams across all parts of England to deliver progress on the ground.

Chief executives of district health authorities have been given the responsibility of setting up local arrangements and will report on these to central Government by the end of September. One or two hon. Members expressed concern at the time of publication of the White Paper—the hon. Member for Knowsley, North may advert to this today—as to why this responsibility was not accorded to local authorities. This is simply because—of all the bodies involved—district health authorities have a direct line of accountability to Ministers in central Government. We attach importance to that as our best method of making sure that something happens on the ground.

We certainly expect local authority chief executives to play a big role in taking forward the drug action teams, and the clear indications are that they are ready to do so. Indeed, we hope that some chief executives or their senior colleagues will come forward to chair such teams, because we have not attempted to dictate the chairing of the organisations, which will depend on what seems best locally.

The hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Mudie) suggested that dynamic, co-ordinated local authority action required representation on the drug action teams by elected members, as well as officials. It would to be better to see how the current proposals develop on the basis that councillors will be keeping in close touch with their senior officials—we would welcome that—and that there is already a degree of flexibility in the arrangements to allow particular individuals to be co-opted on to the teams. I welcome the indications of commitment to the strategy that those who pressed that point are, in effect, expressing.

Each drug action team will decide the chairing arrangements which best suit their work, and we hope to see a variety of agencies and services represented in the chairs across the country. By 31 December this year, I expect to receive action plans from each, setting out their proposals for 1996-97 and 1997-98, and agreed key

[Mr. Newton]

priorities on which local action and funding is to be focused, describing the arrangements for co-ordinating local services to tackle drug misuse and for liaising with other relevant bodies at local, regional and national level, giving their proposals for the use of development funds—£33,000 will be made available to each district health authority for each of the full two years of their work—and giving the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the priorities being undertaken.

Those action plans should also set out proposed arrangements for each drug action team's drug reference group. These groups need a broad membership—this is another point to which I attach great importance—to help forge close working relationships with a wide range of local expertise and local communities. Without that, the drug action teams' impact will be seriously reduced.

The contribution that voluntary and community groups, in particular, can make to this work by their input to drug reference groups will be very substantial. May I take this opportunity—which I am sure everyone in the House today will wish to endorse—of expressing my very considerable appreciation of all those individuals directly involved in tackling drug misuse in voluntary and community organisations throughout the country at the grass roots? They undertake difficult, often thankless, work in the fields of prevention and treatment, and we want drug action teams to make full use of their very considerable expertise and commitment.

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): I endorse what the Leader of the House said about the contribution of the people who are working on the ground. Why will the drug action teams have only one at most representative from such people in their membership? The construction of drug action teams seems somewhat top heavy, with a preponderance of chief executives and chief constables and perhaps one co-opted voluntary sector representative. Should not the balance be shifted more in favour of the people to whom the right hon. Gentleman was referring?

Mr. Newton: I shall come back to the general point arising from what the hon. Gentleman has said in a moment or two, but I shall make two points in direct response to what he has said. First, the thinking that has informed the structure of the drug action teams has been that if there is too large a body, it will not be as effective. Everyone knows that a group of 25, 30 or 40 people is not a good body to oversee executive action, and we want a relatively small body with a main executive responsibility.

Secondly, we want to make sure that all the key agencies involved are directly represented in that body, because they will have to carry out the strategy. The combination of those two factors has led us to propose a structure of tightly focused, smallish and high-level drug action teams associated with the more broadly based drug reference groups. I am not saying that we are sure that we have every last dot and comma of the structure right, and we will be prepared to look at such matters as experience unfolds. But that has been the thinking behind the structure, and I think that it is a sensible approach.

I have spent a little time focusing on those matters, but I do not object at all to the point raised by the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) because the membership of the groups is an important ingredient. The groups provide the key to translating a comprehensive strategic framework into specific, tangible initiatives which make a real difference to local communities. The leadership and determination that will be required in establishing the teams is available and is ready to be deployed.

Having said that, I would not want the House to think for one moment that the Government and others working beyond the local level can now sit back and let the strategy unfold. Departments have over 80 objectives and tasks to undertake within specific timescales and there will be a lot to do in supporting the work at organisational and local level to keep up the momentum and to hold Departments, agencies and drug action teams to account.

Some of this work will fall to our officials in the Central Drugs Co-ordination Unit, led by Sue Street, to whom I pay tribute. The unit has performed massively successful work in the relatively short time since it was established. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes will want to pay a similar tribute to the unit today and to emphasise the importance that he attaches to its work. I assure him that the unit's role for the life of the strategy will be assessed next year, in the expectation that it will continue in some form or other for the life of the strategy.

There will also be wider tasks. We must ensure that we make the best possible use of the large resources already available to us. I reminded the House when I published the White Paper that we already spend more than £500 million on tackling the drugs problem each year, and I announced a further total additional resource of slightly over £13 million this year to support the White Paper initiatives. We also want to increase our knowledge of the scale and nature of the drugs problem that we face, taking careful account of local differences inside England and more widely in the United Kingdom, and keeping the bigger picture in relation to organised crime and the international scene in clear view.

As we do all these things I have no doubt that some elements of the plan set out in the White Paper will, as I told the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms), need to be refined and fine tuned in the light of new issues that arise and practical lessons that are learnt. But I believe that the strategic framework in the White Paper is clear and robust. We need to be ready to use its flexibility to give all involved in combating the drugs problem the most useful practical support throughout the three years of the strategy's life. Then we must provide a good basis for reviewing our priorities and tasks in future years.

I believe that this White Paper gives us a better chance than ever before to make a real difference to the many people whose lives are blighted or threatened by the damage caused by illegal drugs. The strategy that I have outlined and the local tools now available to implement it offer a positive way forward to enhance community safety, reduce health risks and, perhaps most importantly of all, help our young people to protect themselves from the malign influence of drugs on their lives.

So I welcome the debate as a means of signalling the clear collective determination of the House to do all we can to tackle the drugs problem. The Minister of State at the Department for Education and I will listen with close attention to everything that is said by those who contribute to today's debate.

10.1 am

Mr. George Howarth (Knowsley, North): I repeat the welcome for the White Paper offered by my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) when it was introduced. The Lord President will confirm that, ever since the Green Paper, we have consistently supported the Government's approach, offering constructive criticism where necessary, but welcoming the general direction. We confirm the need for a central strategy, and the one advanced by the right hon. Gentleman today broadly meets that need. We also agree with the idea of putting in place local mechanisms for delivering such a strategy. To that extent we broadly welcome the proposals.

It is essential, as far as possible, to build a consensus on this issue, first because the problem affects especially young people in every city, town and village. This is not just an inner-city problem or a rural problem. We in the House and others who are interested in those matters have a duty to build a consensus around our approach to dealing with the problem.

We are all well aware of the links between drug misuse and crime of all kinds, but we should be especially worried about the rise of violent crime associated with the drug industry. Today I put on record the Opposition's endorsement of the Lord President's two main themes: the commitment to proper maintenance of legal deterrents, and the firm enforcement of the law by the police and by Customs and Excise. We should not contemplate decriminalisation or legalisation of any substance that is currently illegal, including cannabis.

Whatever the merits of otherwise of the debate on cannabis, holding out the prospect that it might at some time be legalised or decriminalised—there is a subtle difference—would be wholly wrong, because it would send the wrong signals to young people. Holding out such a prospect to them would blunt the message that we are trying to broadcast.

Secondly, the liberalisation advocated by some is a distraction from the need to portray drugs as a problem. That is why I want to establish at the outset that the Opposition support the strategy set out in the White Paper and will do everything they can to make its implementation a success. I should also like to record my thanks to the Lord President for making his advisers available to me before the debate. I am grateful for that gesture, which bodes well for future co-operation across the House.

I have no doubt that during the debate some hon. Members will attempt to exploit such divisions as exist in some corners of the House. That may be understandable, but it is important to emphasise our broad areas of agreement, not our divisions. Depending on the significance that one attaches to the resolution passed at the Liberal Democrats' conference last year, it would appear that they are in favour of legalising cannabis—

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman has suggested that he intends to be accurate and objective, so he should perhaps bear in mind the fact that the resolution to which he refers recommended that the matter be considered by a royal commission. I have made it clear on many occasions that neither I nor my right hon. and hon. Friends are persuaded that the signal that would be given by legalising possession would be a good one to send out. In that context, I would be interested to know whether the hon. Gentleman thinks that the practice of cautioning as a way of dealing with possession offences—now the practice in half of all possession cases—is the right one.

Mr. Howarth: Talking about a royal commission or explicitly endorsing legalisation or decriminalisation amount to the same thing. What the right hon. Gentleman says is technically correct, but what matters is the message received by the average young person. That is why the conference resolution was a mistake. I do not condemn the right hon. Gentleman or his party for it; I just think that it was wrong.

I have no complaint against the strategy that the police are adopting. Earlier this week I was briefed by the Merseyside drugs squad, so I know about the difficulties that they face and I know that they have to make tactical decisions depending on the circumstances. I would not therefore dissent from the tactics often employed in the field.

I am not trying to isolate the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith). I merely mentioned that resolution to show that there are dissenting voices on the political scene. I have to concede that one or two of my hon. Friends take the same view as the Liberal Democrats—

Mr. Beith: So does the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr. Howarth: I am not so sure about that. The point is that my hon. Friends are always at pains to make it clear that theirs is a personal point of view. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) may seek to speak later; when he does so, I am sure that he will make it clear that he does not speak for the Labour party.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As we are clearing up misunderstandings before they re-emerge, as they undoubtedly will, later in the debate, my hon. Friend might like to point out that there are Conservative Members who hold similar views. I am sure that he was going to get round to saying that, so that we can see that the matter both unites and divides parties across the House and that that is perfectly reasonable.

Mr. Howarth: My hon. Friend read my mind. I was making the point that they are personal views. I do not agree, and the Opposition do not agree, but hon. Members are entitled to hold them.

To round up the balance of what I was saying, I come to the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan). [HON. MEMBERS:"Where is he?"] I exercised the normal courtesies of the House and pointed out to him yesterday that I intended to refer to his views on the subject, but where he is, I cannot say.

The hon. Member for Rutland and Melton recently published a book, a copy of which I have here. I did not purchase it, but got it from the Library. The book goes by the title of "Saturn's Children" and it was co-authored by Domonic Hobson. In the book, the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton advances a number of arguments, one of which is the legalisation of drugs. That is in the context of a general right-of-centre argument about rolling back the frontiers of the state which will not be unfamiliar to many Conservative Members.

[Mr. Howarth]

I quote briefly from the hon. Gentleman's book. The nub of the argument is on page 411:

"Above all, legalisation would save the taxpayer the many millions of pounds the police and the Customs and Excise spend on a war which they not only cannot win but which they are now actually losing, and at considerable cost to the ordinary people caught in the crossfire".

I have simply established that there are dissenting views on both sides of the House. Indeed, if some of the Ulster Unionist Members were here, we might even find some completely different dissenting voices among them. Although dissenting voices exist, there is broad agreement.

Although I would never share some of those views, it is important that the common message that we send out is that, first, taking drugs is wrong, and, secondly, there is no prospect whatever of any legalisation or decriminalisation. That is important for a number of reasons, but it is most important for parents struggling to get children, especially teenage children, to understand that drugs are a path that should not be embarked upon. Similarly, schools, police and other agencies involved in the process would be appalled if the House were to take anything other than the line that we are adopting today.

It is important to be clear that there are unresolved difficulties that need to be addressed if we are to be serious about approaching the problem. First, there is a cycle of hopelessness that affects many young people. That has to have some impact on this problem.

Unemployment, as it affects school leavers and, more recently, graduates, cannot in itself be an excuse for embarking on the path to taking drugs, but it can be put down as part of the cause in some cases. That has many tragic consequences of which we are all aware, not least the sense of a lack of a stake in society, which leads people to have the proper self-control and self-discipline that comes with employment. That must be a factor in drawing people into the pernicious tentacles of the drug culture. Most certainly, that sense of hopelessness has grown remorselessly over the past two decades and the Government cannot entirely escape their share of the blame for that phenomenon.

I shall quote briefly from a document that hon. Members may have had from Turning Point, which is a well-respected national charity dealing with the problem. It quotes a long-term alcohol, opiate and tranquilliser user as saying:

"I was told I could leave (the rehab) when I found somewhere to live. The social services wouldn't give me any money 'til I found a flat. I couldn't get a flat until I had money to pay in advance. So it was a Catch 22. That's why I went to live with a drug dealer."

The problems that such people face are often practical and lead people into that sort of culture and difficulty.

Similarly, the Local Government Drugs Forum, a respected body that has done some solid and useful work, quotes from a paper produced by the Scottish Drugs Misuse Task Force called "Drugs in Scotland: Meeting the Challenge", which states:

"Drug misuse tends to flourish in conditions of deprivation, alienation and poverty of aspiration."

The Local Government Drugs Forum continues:

"People with drug problems must have available the opportunity to recover with a seamless division between health care and social care. People recovering from drug problems require access to and the support of employment opportunities, housing and quality primary health care in order to stabilise and sustain their lifestyles."

That argument needs to be taken into account.

We need to be absolutely certain that the necessary resources are available, and in the right place and at the right time. That is not just good policy; it makes economic sense. The Lord President of the Council will be aware of a recent study in the United States, which evaluated drug recovery services in California. After a comprehensive survey, it concluded that for every dollar spent on drug rehabilitation and treatment, $7 was saved for the Californian taxpayer. It could conclude that because it was able to take into account the cost of crime and other problems that follow from drug abuse. That serves to illustrate that that is a cost-effective way of dealing with the problem and a necessary and right way of dealing with it in principle.

Similarly, a Turning Point survey shows that 20 per cent. of its clients cited delays in funding as a contributory factor to their failure to come off drugs and alcohol. Those are people who have attempted to come off drugs, found that they could not get back into the mainstream of society and drifted back into drug or alcohol abuse.

There is also widespread and legitimate concern that the potential 400 job losses in the Customs and Excise service will create further problems in the effort to stem the supply of drugs. Last year, as the House will be aware, customs officers seized 51 tonnes of drugs estimated to be worth over £550 million.

I understand that the new strategy adopted by Customs and Excise is to operate in a more mobile and flexible way. The Lord President made that point in his statement, in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury. I understand that argument, but not everybody who works in the field—and there is a great deal of expertise available—accepts it. It is not entirely clear that it is going to work in the way that the Lord President and others hope. It seems to me self-evident that if we reduce the number of customs officers by 400, it must have an impact on intercepting the supply of illegal substances. I hope that there will be further consideration of that proposal.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is important to raise this point of order now, bearing in mind the time that we have for this debate. It has just been announced that there will be a private notice question at 11 am. Are you, therefore, able to rule that speeches should be curtailed, bearing in mind the number of hon. Members who wish to take part in the debate? Would you also look at the procedures of this place to avoid this happening again?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): It is not possible for me now to place a time limit, because that has to be done at the outset of the debate. The hon. Gentleman's point of order, however, gives me the opportunity to say what I might have said after the Front-Bench contributions—that I hope that hon. Members will make their contributions fairly short. I say that not only because of the private notice question at 11 am, but because of the large number of hon. Members who have indicated already that they wish to contribute.

Mr. Howarth: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I assure the hon. Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson) that I do not intend to take any more time than the Lord President, who was admirably brief in his opening remarks.

It is important to reiterate the point that there is widespread and legitimate concern that if the new strategy does not work, it should be quickly picked up and quickly reversed. I ask the Lord President, who co-ordinates Government policy in the matter, if he is not prepared to reverse the job cuts, at least to set up a system of monitoring how effective the changes in operational responsibilities in Customs and Excise are. If a problem emerges, I hope that it will be dealt with quickly, because nobody wants the successes of the past to be reversed.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Howarth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for calling me his hon. Friend. I give way to him.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, especially as there is such pressure on time in this debate. Does he agree that as well as trying to stop drugs at our borders, it is essential that we share proper intelligence, especially with our nearest European neighbours? Does he agree that that is as effective as trying to stop the stuff at our borders?

Mr. Howarth: I am not sure that I agree that that would be equally effective, but I acknowledge the importance of the hon. Gentleman's point and agree with it.

I now refer briefly to education, about which my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) will have more to say later. Although we welcome the £5.9 million that has been made available under the White Paper, we have made the point—my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury made this point during the statement—that that works out at only £240 per school. I understand the argument that the money will not be allocated on that basis; it will not be allocated at so much per school, after which the schools do what they want. The money will be a pool from which projects and ideas can draw resources. However, it is not a lot of money to be spread across the country. I hope that the Lord President understands that the amount needs to be kept under review, because there are important projects and approaches that need to be financed if we are to get the education side of the message right. We need to ensure that the resources are there to do the job.

I again make a point that I have raised consistently over the past six to nine months and which I know that the Central Drugs Co-ordination Unit and the Lord President are interested in. My point concerns how we get the message across and how we focus the ideas and techniques available to, for example, the advertising industry, so that they can be more successful than in the past. There is now clear evidence—there is no dispute about this—that the well-meaning and well-intentioned anti-heroin campaign through public advertising in the 1980s did not have the desired effect. I do not say that as a criticism, because effectiveness is difficult to achieve. I believe, however, that it is necessary for us to conduct some more detailed research and to talk to the advertising industry and those who know how to get messages across. After all, as political parties, we are keen to talk to them about getting the message across. We should try to find out how we could get the message across better to young people. I should be pleased to support any efforts made in that direction.

With due deference to my hon. Friends, who are not in this category, there is an element of men in grey suits trying to determine what is the best way in which to get the message across to teenagers, which does not quite square the circle. I have no prescription for that, but I believe that it is important that we consider the point.

I am concerned—this concern is, I am sure, shared by many—about the problems of drug abuse in our prisons. In his report on Styal prison, Judge Tumim stated:

> "Inmates asserted, and staff agreed, that drugs were freely available in Styal, mainly brought in by visitors and by inmates who had been on Home Leave. They said that almost all inmates used cannabis in addition to which 80 per cent. used opiates (mainly heroin), 50 per cent. cocaine/crack, 15-20 per cent. amphetamines, 10 per cent. LSD occasionally, and 60 per cent. benzodiazepines (mainly Temazepam). It was believed that 60 per cent. of those who injected used shared needles. Inmates were aware of the risk of contaminated needles."

That is possibly the worst example in Judge Tumim's reports on various prisons and it is certainly the worst example that I have come across. Although I am not saying that that is typical of every prison, we know that drugs are readily available in many of our prisons. We know that there are risks of HIV, hepatitis and other diseases that are spread by the use of shared needles. It is an area to which more attention needs to be given. I know that the Lord President shares my concern on this subject, but I believe that more needs to be done and I hope that, at the appropriate time, further initiatives will be taken within the Prison Service.

I now come to some criticisms that we have made about the local drug action teams and about the other instruments that, according to the White Paper, the Government intend to deploy at local level. My hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury rightly made the point that a more considered approach should be taken to how to deploy the expertise available to local authorities. The same point applies to the use of the police. Although I have nothing but the highest respect for the chief executive of my local authority and for the chief constable of Merseyside, it strikes me that that is not necessarily the right level at which to pitch the involvement. Often, further down the chain, for example at superintendent level in the police and perhaps at a more junior level in local government, there is expertise that can be brought to bear and which would be more helpful.

The involvement of local councillors can often be crucial and beneficial in the local drug action teams. I say that not because local councillors are elected officials, although that is important, but because, through living in the community, which senior police officers and chief officers often do not, they have a detailed knowledge of what is going on on the ground, which can be brought to bear and which can be very useful. From the detailed meetings that I have from time to time with local authority members in my own area and with the local police, I know that the knowledge and expertise that local councillors can bring to bear is appreciated by the police and is of use. Although I accept that that involvement will not be built into the system, I hope that there will be no ban on local councillors being included, where appropriate, in the local drug action teams.

The Lord President has made it clear that he hopes that the voluntary sector will be involved in drug reference groups and local drug action teams. There are some very good local projects, some of which have already been mentioned. There is a good drugs unit in Kirby in my

[Mr. Howarth]

constituency. My hon. Friends the Members for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) and for Newham, North-West have a drugs project in their area which has a good reputation. I hope that, where appropriate, those organisations will not only be incorporated in the system, but will continue to receive support for their excellent work.

Mr. Newton: I did not think it right, not least because of pressure of time, to seek to intervene to comment on all the hon. Gentleman's arguments. However, perhaps he will turn to page 30 of the White Paper, where he will find that there is provision for rather greater flexibility than he has implied. For the police, there will be the ranks of chief constable, assistant chief constable or equivalents, or superintendent. Paragraph 5.6 states:

"The Teams will have the discretion to co-opt additional members with special skills, commitment or expertise."

I think that the necessary flexibility is there.

Mr. Howarth: I was not criticising a lack of flexibility. I accept that there is flexibility. It is important sometimes, however, to ensure that flexibility is available at all levels, and especially at lower levels. That is the point that I am making, and I think that the Lord President accepts it.

It is important that the debate is taking place. We are discussing a crucial issue. I hope that we can get things right. If there are mistakes and faults in the mechanisms that are being set up, I hope that the Government will be willing to be co-operative. I hope that they will be able to monitor how the strategy works as it unfolds. If it is seen over time that improvements can be made, I hope that the Government will make them. It would be entirely wrong to set in place a strategy, welcome though it is, on the assumption that we can all complacently sit back and assume that everything in the garden is rosy when manifestly that may not turn out to be so.

It is right and responsible that the debate is taking place. It is right and responsible that the Government have taken the steps that they have. I hope that it is right and responsible that we, the Opposition, have supported the Government. I hope also that the rest of the debate reflects the consensus-building approach that we have all adopted, so that the message goes out from the House that things are happening, that drug taking is wrong and that it is not an ineluctable process that cannot be reversed over time.

10.31 am

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): As my right hon. Friend the Lord President and Opposition Members have said, drug-taking is a tragic threat to all our families and communities in this country, in the rest of Europe and throughout the world. Everyone is a potential victim, and I think that people are becoming aware of that. More drugs are more readily available nowadays than ever before, but too few people appreciate the real dangers of drugs misuse. Drugs misuse is costing the taxpayer huge sums in tackling crime and in providing treatment. Even more important, it is costing individuals their health.

It is against that background that the White Paper was produced. Like others, I welcome it. I do so especially in the awareness, as I have said before, that Governments find it extremely difficult to tie themselves down to any strategy on any subject. The strategy and co-ordination of effort that the White Paper reflects are what the all-party drugs misuse group, which I am proud to chair, has been arguing now for many years.

I offer my congratulations on the consultation process—not something always associated with government. The process, the reactions following it and the changes that have been incorporated in the White Paper following the production of the Green Paper in the autumn of 1994 are extremely welcome.

I welcome this full day's debate, for which I thank my right hon. Friend the Lord President, wearing his other hat as Leader of the House. In anticipation of a Department of Education Minister winding up the debate, I strongly welcome that ministerial presence, which gives added emphasis to the importance of good health education in the process of more effective prevention.

To take up the point made in an intervention by the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), I welcome the reference in the White Paper to the single regeneration budget, which shows the Government tipping their hat towards the broader aspects of policy, such as housing, employment and training, in the confused area of drugs misuse.

At the forefront of our minds, and running throughout the White Paper, is the importance of activities directed towards the young. I offer my praise to local efforts in Sussex, particularly the East Sussex Drug Advisory Council and, more recently, the Home Office drugs prevention team, the first unit of which was established in Brighton and covers the whole of East Sussex. I welcome the additional accent that the White Paper gives.

Colleagues will have noted on reading the White Paper that the Department of Health is providing £1 million to fund new initiatives to develop services for young people, especially those at special risk of drugs misuse or in the early stages of drug taking. I understand that the standing conference on drugs misuse has received bids totalling about £10 million. That reflects the innovative and creative approaches that can be applied to the horrible problem with which we seek to deal and the widespread threat of drug taking among the young. In this area of government, as in others, we must watch carefully to assure that sufficient funds are being applied.

The marketing of home drug-testing kits has come to the fore. This form of testing is not mentioned in the White Paper, but it could be encouraged by it. I have deep reservations about the use of such kits by parents, with or without the knowledge of their teenage children to whom they are applying such tests. This testing may seem practical and immediate, and a way in which parents can come to grips with the problem. However, I fear that the risks inherent in eroding the trust and the overall relationship which should exist between parent and child, and without which the parent is incapable of helping his or her child to resist or come out from the problems of drugs misuse, could be exacerbated. As ADFAM National said recently, it is better to talk than to test.

References have already been made to a new prison policy, and I will take them up because of the well-known Lewes prison in my constituency. I fear that there is real potential for resentment if testing is not matched equally by the availability of counselling and treatment. There is a risk that prisoners will be reluctant to seek help from drug workers in prisons, especially if they feel that such

a resource would finger them as people who should be tested, or targeted for testing. As the chairman of the Prison Governors Association has said:

"Testing must be balanced with measures to assist prisoners cope with this problem, and assistance in getting out of the habit is just as important."

I welcome the £10 million that the Prison Service is making available for support programmes. The voluntary agencies are already preparing bids to meet that requirement. I believe that the service can draw knowledge from the marvellous operations already being undertaken by the Addictive Diseases Trust and by Phoenix House. They have set a good example in terms of the services that should be provided.

I also advocate the better use of boards of visitors, which sometimes have a capacity to help with the institution of new processes in prisons. That capacity is sometimes overlooked.

Are the Government giving any consideration to investigating, and perhaps even piloting and evaluating, what seems to be an interesting and successful initiative in the United States with the establishment of specialised drug courts? That alternative to the criminal justice system seems to be successfully and satisfactorily diverting misusers into treatment under the control of the courts instead of going to a medical centre. The establishment of those courts and their operation in the United States has already indicated that they are more effective than the criminal courts. The Miami initiative, which was where it started, is already being picked up in other states. I believe that that would be a worthwhile initiative to try here.

Within the constraints of time, perhaps I may briefly identify some problem areas which I believe need to be tackled within the context of the White Paper. The first has to do with the operation of social services departments. I question whether sufficiently widespread and proper services, appropriate to local needs of drugs misusers, are being made available through the new community care responsibilities. Services should be strategic and needs-led, but I fear that they are sometimes more revenue-led or resource-led. That was identified as a problem in a recent report from the social services inspectorate in five representative departments around the country. Not only were they thought to be too resource-led, but all too often they also seemed to be too inaccessible. That, too, needs looking at.

This country also needs, as do other countries, a better understanding of the process of health and drugs education to prevent young people from being lured into drugs. I am certain that generic health education is the proper way to approach drugs prevention. The educational value and the interest and appeal to pupils is in little doubt with schemes such as those mounted by life education centres or by TACADE—the Advisory Council on Alcohol and Drug Education—but I believe that we need a more precise measurement of efficacy. I believe that research is planned, and I hope that it will be instituted soon to measure that efficacy and see where we can get the very best health education for our children. May I say in parentheses that, despite what my right hon. Friend the Lord President said, I still worry about the ability of the schools inspectorate to do its job properly in the regular monitoring of health education without having more special training.

In health education, misusers are often used as peer educators and advisers on how best to plan and deliver services to drugs misusers. They can be extremely useful, particularly among groups of new problem drugs users, such as crack users, which tragically are developing now. The use of crack is not widespread, but it is growing. The users are generally young and mainly white. Two thirds of users are male. Almost all are poly abusers—mostly mixing with heroin—and all too often they are completely out of control. It can be of immense value in planning how best to reach those people and to help them out of that problem if one taps into the knowledge available among their own peer group.

We are still faced with the problems of whether teachers in our schools are sufficiently trained to do their job, not only in terms of health education but in being able to aid and advise the pupils with whom they have to relate. As the Professional Association of Teachers has pointed out:

"Neither the levels nor the quality of training available to teachers in respect of drug education are currently"—

that is, this very month—

"adequate."

The White Paper identifies £5.9 million in grant for the education and support of teachers, and that is extremely welcome. As others have pointed out, however, I wonder whether that will be sufficient. I also wonder whether the whole question of health education is not still too closely tied to the science sector of the national curriculum.

On training and information, there is still the risk that all medical staff, particularly general practitioners, are inadequately informed and inadequately trained to assist to the best of their abilities in providing not only drugs treatment but assistance in the Government's efforts on international prevention.

My next concern, which is touched on too lightly in the White Paper, is whether the Government are giving sufficient support and encouragement to international agencies, and the Government's activities within them, particularly in Europe but also in international agencies, to help control production and to tackle international trafficking and money laundering and the crime that goes with it.

A matter which has been touched on already is the continuing advocacy of drugs legalisation by too many people who I believe should know better. Organisations such as Release support it as part of what they see as human rights. Individuals such as the director of the National Youth Agency advocate it as being in the interests of young people, although I am glad to say that that has been firmly sat upon and I believe that she is moving on to other areas—a bit late, in my view. Others claim that the legalisation of drugs would rob the Mafia of its markets and profits and would cause the crime rate to fall, but the truth is that it would automatically create millions more drug users, seeking stronger and stronger drugs for bigger and bigger highs. Yet others claim that no harm is done by some drugs, such as cannabis, but the opposite is true in both medical and psychological terms. Still others, out of desperation, say that there is no other way out; yet there is a growing recognition, as identified in the White Paper, that prevention does work and that treatment can be effective.

[Mr. Tim Rathbone]

I believe that there is a need for better public understanding, not just of the Government's position and, indeed, that of the Opposition on this, but of the reasons for that position. Agencies such as the London Drugs Forum, and the City of London, in its co-operation in "Cities Against Drugs Around the World", are doing a great deal. It has been debated in the Council of Europe, but I believe that the Government have a responsibility to collect together the information and to promulgate it more effectively than ever before.

There is no doubt that there is an ever greater need for more resources and stronger leadership. The Government have given a lead, at least, with the White Paper and the funding identified in it. That must continue. I still believe that seized assets from drugs dealers should be recycled into tackling the drugs problem. The White Paper is the proper, strategic beginning of nationally co-ordinated efforts to tackle drugs misuse in Britain, but leadership must be encouraged and it must be forthcoming from businesses, non-profit organisations and voluntary organisations not yet involved in this work, locally, in the regions, nationally and internationally.

The White Paper shows the way—I am confident of that. The good works have started. The drugs prevention teams are operating and will be expanded. The expansion of all that effort must be the motivation for the Government's drugs co-ordination unit in the next few years. I warmly welcome the reassuring words of my right hon. Friend the Lord President in his opening speech about its future. If that unit, which has done a magnificent job, continues to operate in the intelligent way that it has done, if it is given a truly United Kingdom remit and not just for England, and if it is supported by proper Government funding for the demand reduction efforts of prevention, intervention, treatment and research, we can be assured of safer and healthier families and communities in Britain. That is what the White Paper is really all about.

10.49 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): As the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) ended with the decriminalisation issue, I shall start with it and say that my right hon. Friends and I are not in favour of the decriminalisation of cannabis and consider that the most appropriate place for such an issue to be considered is a royal commission. I would take a lot of convincing and a lot of evidence before I would be prepared to take the risk of signalling public approval of what is dangerously described as recreational drug-taking, as that signal could readily increase the use of other drugs.

Changing the law in that way will not stop the dealers. Organised crime, so much of which is tied up with drugs, will either move to an opened-up cannabis market or take up the increased demand for other drugs that may result from such a change.

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Beith: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will allow me to finish my sentence. There is a danger, however, that if the issue of decriminalisation is viewed as some sort of virility test of whether organisations and individuals are serious about the commitment to a drugs strategy, the views of many people who have relevant experience will be inappropriately dismissed. The Leader of the House has served us well by seeking to raise the debate to a higher level than one of simply testing people according to whether they fit a pre-defined set of criteria, of which decriminalisation is the principal one. He moved it to a level at which we may make some objective examination of the issues involved.

Mr. George Howarth: I am, however, genuinely confused. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain this to me? If he and his right hon. and hon. Friends are all opposed to the legalisation agenda, why does he want to set up a royal commission?

Mr. Beith: I wish to continue my argument. A number of initiatives in relation to this matter, which I shall come to later, although that may be interrupted by a private notice question, have not been addressed in the White Paper. They are fundamental issues about why young people take drugs and about what sort of things are likely to stop them taking drugs. The White Paper does not begin to deal with that. It is about the structures and procedures by which we can proceed with roughly the sort of strategy for which consensus now exists. It does not deal with what we do if some of that fails or with the great doubts that exist.

The only body that would have any chance of convincing me that we should have a change in where the boundary of the law should fall would be one that assessed evidence carefully and objectively—rather more objectively than some of those who take part in this public argument. The royal commission is the proper body to do that. Over the years, we have used such bodies sensibly when there are major areas of controversy to consider.

I welcome the interdepartmental approach that the White Paper represents and the fact that the Leader of the House has personally put considerable effort into it and has, as I said in an earlier intervention, listened to criticisms that were made at the Green Paper stage and responded to them. I hope that a great deal of good, in the form of commitment and co-ordinated effort in dealing with this scourge of our society, will emerge from the White Paper, but I have some doubts and anxieties and I shall refer to some of the anxieties of others.

One is bound to ask whether we are simply creating a new bureaucratic structure that is not locally accountable and that is primarily health-led. The lack of real local accountability is a problem because we need to take communities with us on this issue; we need to build up the support of local communities. People identify more closely with their local authority than with health organisations which have changed their names, status and functions and are surrounded by controversy over matters that are nothing much to do with the issue.

The Government's reason for using the Department of Health and the health authorities as the lead is precisely that they are directly accountable to them. They are part of the centralised aspect of Government. The Government see that as a virtue; I see it as a potential weakness. The local community commitment might be better reflected if the lead were taken by locally accountable organisations.

Mr. Newton: Again, I do not want to interrupt every time someone says something with which I do not agree, but it is important for me to restate that the reason for asking health authorities to do this is simply that someone needs to take the lead in setting the scheme up. That is not the same as saying that they must have the lead role in the on-going action. It is important that there should be direct accountability to central Government because, frankly, as everyone knows, local arrangements vary enormously in their effectiveness and in some cases have not been effective.

Mr. Beith: The Leader of the House is more convincing if he is saying that this is just the process of setting it up; someone has got to set the scheme up, so let the health bodies set it up, rather than this being done as a means of centralisation. I also hope that his remarks suggest that the involvement of a central Government appointee or someone responsible to central Government will produce more funding and readier access to Government funds. If we can draw that advantage from the arrangement, it would be fine, but a serious disadvantage exists.

I am still unclear, even from reading the White Paper, where the existing Home Office drug prevention teams will fit into the process. There is considerable potential overlap in the many areas where those teams exist. They may not even have the same boundaries as the new areas and they will operate over similar matters.

It is important to involve voluntary organisations. The Government have sought to do that through the drug reference teams, but, again, I hope that the process will not be too bureaucratic. We want both specialised voluntary organisations and the more general community organisations such as churches, the rotary organisation and all bodies involved in giving practical help to projects to raise money, find facilities, provide accommodation and, in all sorts of practical ways, help to keep things moving. We do not want matters to get bogged down in committees, meetings and the exchange of papers all the time.

The second area of anxiety involves resources. There are three areas where I fear that key resources may not be available or may not be sufficient. One of them is schools. It may sound like a lot of money, but it is £193 per school and it is going to schools that have serious resource problems. Even the Government and the Secretary of State for Education recognise that schools are severely stretched. There is not the extra teaching time. Staff time is not available to give the effort in each school which the White Paper requires. Whatever supplementary training provision is made out of these funds, it cannot replace the need to find someone who can spend some hours outside the immense commitments of the national curriculum and the introduction of testing to do the job that is called for. A serious resource problem exists which is primarily to do with the existing resource problem of schools. We are asking schools to do a difficult job when they are hopelessly overstretched. It will not work.

Secondly, I can see no evidence of resources going into rehabilitation centres, which need to be an important part of the strategy. I gather that there is to be an announcement today about treatment services for young people. I do not know how far that is going to go, but it is important that resources go into rehabilitation centres for addicts.

Thirdly, I am not clear that there will be adequate resources in prisons. Some of the drugs problems in prisons have resulted from lack of prison resources. Prison searches have been withdrawn. That has happened in prisons in my constituency where staffing has not been available for adequate searching.

Incredible ingenuity is used to get drugs into prisons. They come in babies' nappies and are concealed within the persons of visitors. All sorts of tricks and techniques are used. You would be surprised, Madam Deputy Speaker, how many friends and family of prisoners are happy to take part in the provision of drugs to feed the drug addiction of those in prisons, which is on a serious scale.

We need resources for constructive programmes of work and activity for prisoners. We will not wean people off drug dependence unless they have some sort of constructive activity in which to engage in prison. That is costly.

The Prison Service is instructed to include in its business plan action to reduce the level of drug misuse. Again, there is no clear indication of the resources that will be available, even for that, let alone for more adventurous treatment, such as the scheme undertaken at Downview prison in Surrey with the Addictive Diseases Trust, where prisoners are being brought into a programme, consenting to urine testing, signing a contract or taking part in a programme that is designed to make the prison 100 per cent. drug free. If more of that work is to go on, we need the resources for it.

We must consider one of the more fundamental issues that plagues the White Paper. I am pleased that the Leader of the House has sought to deal with it in response to the criticisms in relation to the Green Paper. That issue is the tension between harm reduction strategies and strategies designed to promote abstinence. I am perfectly familiar with that problem. I do not drink alcohol, but, at the same time, I must recognise that schemes to deal with alcohol cannot simply be based on the preaching of abstinence. Real problems exist, which are described in paragraph 4.1 of the White Paper. Harm minimisation is embraced as an objective secondary to that of encouraging abstinence. Many who are involved in the treatment of drug misusers are cautious about the claim that we can cure people of their drug addiction readily. Some people say that drug addiction is a chronically relapsing condition. Often addicts come from social conditions where drug dependency has become normalised and accepted, and where opportunities for self-betterment are extremely restricted.

The White Paper specifically endorses needle exchange schemes to fight against HIV infection. That is an example of a harm-minimising strategy that might appear to be in conflict with preaching abstinence. Problems arise, for example, in dealing with Ecstasy. The Government recognise that water should be available at raves, but they are not so keen on the idea of chill-out rooms, which some of those involved in dealing with the problem consider to be necessary. The Government believe that the provision of such rooms might seem to imply approval of drug taking. We must recognise that unavoidable tension exists between the two different strategies aimed at combating drug misuse. A Government decision to opt for a certain strategy should not be seen as a virility test.

It being Eleven o'clock, MADAM SPEAKER *interrupted the proceedings, pursuant to Standing Order No. 11 (Friday sittings).*

PowerGen and National Power

11 am

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East) *(by private notice)* asked the Financial Secretary to the Treasury if he will make a statement on the inquiry into the sale of shares in PowerGen and National Power.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Sir George Young): The stock exchange yesterday released a letter from its chief executive, Michael Lawrence, to the Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Terence Burns. The letter enclosed the initial findings of the stock exchange's inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the Genco 2 sale and asked the Treasury to examine further the circumstances surrounding the sale, including the dissemination of information between various parts of the public sector and between the public sector and the market. Sir Terence Burns replied that the Treasury is taking this work forward and will respond in substance to the stock exchange in due course. Since the release of that exchange of letters there has been a great deal of misinformed, inaccurate and hysterical comment. It would be helpful if I clarified a number of issues.

First, there is nothing sinister to be read into the release by the stock exchange of its letter to the Treasury's Permanent Secretary, Sir Terence Burns; nor is it the case that release of the letter signifies that the stock exchange has found criminal or unwarranted behaviour by the Treasury or other Departments. Stock exchange initial reports are normally passed to the appropriate regulatory body. Only in a small proportion of cases do stock exchange reports result in action by the regulatory or prosecuting bodies.

In this case, the Treasury and the stock exchange agreed that the letter should be released. It is important that the procedures are open and are seen to be open.

Secondly, the stock exchange report of its initial inquiry does not criticise the Treasury or any other party. The Treasury does not have the authority to release the exchange's initial report—that decision is for the stock exchange. The report has, I understand, been compiled in line with normal practice under confidentiality undertakings given by the stock exchange.

The stock exchange has asked the Treasury to examine further the circumstances surrounding the sale, and we are prepared to do so. The Treasury's response will be published for all to see. Moreover, despite assertions to the contrary, neither the Treasury nor other Departments have immunity from insider dealing under the Criminal Justice Act 1993. It is entirely open to the prosecution authorities to investigate if they believe that there is a case to be answered. The Treasury will, of course, co-operate fully with any requests.

The Treasury is taking forward the work requested by the stock exchange urgently. Sir Terence Burns has asked a senior Treasury official, who was in no way involved in the Genco 2 sale, to lead the work. He will examine in detail the events surrounding the share sale and the actions of all the parties involved. Having done so, he will draft the Treasury's response, which will be sent to the stock exchange and then published.

Mr. Brown: While I am grateful to the Minister for coming to the House this morning, is not his response wholly inadequate not simply to a letter from the stock exchange, but to the new and serious charges made this morning by the chief executive of the stock exchange? Does he accept that the Government's proposals are no answer to the charge that damage has been done to the City's financial reputation and that there is an urgent need to repair our reputation? When serious allegations are made about the Treasury, no one would agree that the Treasury should be put in charge of investigating the Treasury.

What is new is that, this morning, the chief executive of the stock exchange said that, but for the Treasury's position in relation to the Crown immunity, he would have referred the matter to the prosecution or regulatory authorities. Will the Minister now join me in asking the stock exchange to publish the initial report of its inquiries and the reply sent yesterday by the Permanent Secretary of the Treasury? Will he join me in asking the Serious Fraud Office and the Securities and Investments Board to carry out investigations into the matter? Does he agree that an independent inquiry, under a judge, should be set up into the matter? Even if he agrees that the stock exchange is not in a position to take the matter further, does he accept that section 47 of the Financial Services Act 1986 contains powers to appoint investigators where allegations about market manipulation have been made? Does he therefore agree that no further privatisation sales should be carried out until those matters are cleared up?

Is not this inquiry the mark of an increasingly desperate Government, who are gambling to raise money, short-circuiting their own rules and running away from an open and public investigation of the consequences of their actions? That goes for the Chancellor as well, who ran away this morning to his country house, when he should be in the House answering questions on this matter. Is not this a Government whom no one will trust to investigate themselves?

Sir George Young: I entirely reject any accusations made by the hon. Gentleman that the Government have acted improperly in any way.

The Government are doing exactly what the chief executive of the stock exchange asked us to do in his letter. He has asked the Treasury to take the matter forward and that is exactly what we are doing. As for the stock exchange report, as I said in my initial reply, it is a matter for the stock exchange. It was compiled under the normal rules of confidentiality which apply to the stock exchange. It is entirely a matter for it.

I dealt with the SFO in my original reply. Its course of action is entirely its concern as it is an independent body.

What the Government are now doing represents the right way forward. A factual report will be compiled into what happened and that will then be made available to the stock exchange. That is exactly what we have been asked to do by the stock exchange and exactly what we are going to do.

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): Does my right hon. Friend accept that Conservative Members believe that the investigation is being carried out in a totally appropriate manner? Where the stock exchange feels that there are legitimate reasons for raising questions, it is totally normal for it to ask the selling shareholder to answer them. It is totally reasonable for the Treasury to reply to those questions in a proper manner. It would be inappropriate for a judge to reply to those questions since that person would not have access to the Treasury papers

and all the detailed information required for the reply. The matter can properly be dealt with in the way in which my right hon. Friend has identified, which satisfies Conservative Members.

Sir George Young: I agree with my hon. Friend. No new information has come into the public domain which in any way disputes the version of events that the Treasury gave at the time. We co-operated in full with the stock exchange in its initial report into the matter. We propose that the Treasury will do exactly what it has been asked to do by the stock exchange.

The report will be prepared by a senior official of the Treasury, who was in no way involved in the sale. A response will be made to the stock exchange which will then be put in the public domain for any further action that is then called for. I believe that that is a responsible and proper way to respond to yesterday's letter from the stock exchange.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon): Does the Minister accept that satisfying his hon. Friends will not satisfy the public or the stock exchange? Does he accept that people cannot take seriously the idea of Treasury officials investigating Treasury Ministers? That is too cosy by half.

The Government have lectured the country and the House about the values of privatisation in the marketplace, notwithstanding tax write-offs, discounts and discounted shares. They, too, should be bound by the rules of the marketplace that they suggest other people should follow. The right course of action is not a cumbersome, independent inquiry, which could turn into a witch hunt of the Government, but an inquiry carried out by the stock exchange. It is the appropriate body to do that because it is independent and it has the power to do so. It would want to do that if the rules of Crown immunity did not debar it from doing so. Will he not allow the stock exchange to do its job?

Sir George Young: Perhaps it would be best if I read the last sentence of the letter from Michael Lawrence of the stock exchange. It says:

"In the circumstances, the Exchange believes that the best way forward is for the Treasury itself to determine how to examine further the handling of this privatisation, including the dissemination of information between various parts of the public sector and between the public sector and the market."

That is exactly what we are doing.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Is my right hon. Friend surprised to hear the integrity of distinguished public officials at the Treasury questioned in the way that they have been? Does he agree that those challenges are wrong, unfair and misguided and that they should be withdrawn?

Sir George Young: I very much hope that no suggestion is being made that will in any way compromise the integrity of the senior civil servant who will carry out this exercise. That would be a very serious matter and I hope that no suggestions along those lines will be made this morning.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Does the Minister accept that his reply will be widely seen outside the House as disingenuous? He said that the Government are doing only what the stock exchange has asked them to do. He quotes from the letter in which the chief executive says that "in the circumstances" he is asking the Treasury to conduct an investigation. Is not it the case that "the circumstances" are the fact that the stock exchange believes that the Treasury has Crown immunity from the relevant sections of the Financial Services Act? The stock exchange is only asking the Treasury to conduct that inquiry faute de mieux. It is not a question of criticising the integrity of individuals, but that the Treasury investigating the Treasury cannot carry any credibility with the public.

Sir George Young: Two issues arise from that. First, our response to the stock exchange report will be sent to the stock exchange and published. Of course it will then be open to the stock exchange or anybody else to comment on the report or, indeed, to take any further action. Secondly, the stock exchange does not normally carry out investigatory actions. Indeed, the letter from the chief executive says:

"The Exchange is concerned with the maintenance of an orderly and fair market, but, in most instances, is not a formal investigatory or prosecutory body."

That is not its role. It does not normally carry out investigations and that is why it will not in this case.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the constant call to bring in a judge at every twist and turn of public events has become farcical? Such a distinguished figure takes minutes, wastes money and frequently does not produce the result for which the Opposition hope. Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the privatisation programme, which the Government have in place, will in no way be delayed?

Sir George Young: We will certainly be proceeding with our privatisation programme as planned. I agree with my hon. Friend. Nothing has been said this morning or yesterday which would in any way justify bringing in a judge, for which some people have been asking this morning.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Does the Minister believe that those shareholders who lost money over the purchase of shares in National Power and PowerGen will be satisfied with the explanation that he has given this morning?

Sir George Young: If the hon. Gentleman looks at the *Financial Times* today, he will see that the shares are now standing at a premium over what investors paid at the beginning of March. So the question of a loss by those investors does not arise.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): Hon. Members must have some sympathy for the Minister having to come to the House instead of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The Chancellor is on record as accepting that price-sensitive information was available to the Treasury before the sale began. In view of that, how can the Minister defend the Treasury examining itself and its own behaviour? How can the Minister expect the thousands of small shareholders who lost money on this sale—and the large institutions which lost millions—to accept such self-regulation by the Treasury?

Sir George Young: Professor Littlechild did not decide to undertake his review until the afternoon of Monday 6 March, after trading had begun in National Power and PowerGen shares. We took financial and legal advice on 3 March about the possibility that Professor Littlechild

[Sir George Young]

might make an announcement on initiating a consultation about reopening the distribution price caps on the regional electricity companies—not the Genco companies. The advice that we received was that no change was required to the prospectus. The prospectus refers to a confirmation by the regulator of his position on the regulatory regime applicable to the generators. On 3 March, before the flotation, the regulator's office confirmed that that remained accurate.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Does the Minister accept that the Government are being foolish in asking the Treasury to inquire into the Treasury? When the Treasury report is eventually prepared, what access will there be to the background documents on which that report is based?

Sir George Young: I explained that the response would be published when it is made available to the stock exchange. The background papers would not normally be published at the same time. Of course it would be open to the various bodies in the House, including—I assume—the body of which the right hon. Gentleman is a distinguished servant, to take the matter further if it so decided.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Is not the real key that in all the privatisations of former nationalised utilities, the regulatory risk has been well known? Indeed, it was clearly spelt out in the memorandum attached to the particular flotation about which we are talking. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government did not ask the regulator to undertake an investigation, but that the regulator did it off his own bat under the powers given to him under the previous privatisations?

Sir George Young: My hon. Friend makes a valid point. We have an independent regulator, independent of the Government. The stock exchange and investors are now getting accustomed to buying and selling shares in a regulatory regime, where regulators are independent of the Government and rightly independent of the companies concerned. Those adjustments are being made and will go on being made.

Drug Misuse

Question again proposed, That this House do now adjourn.

11.16 am

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Before I was so interestingly interrupted, I was talking about chill-out rooms. They are not for indignant shareholders of privatised power companies, or even for hon. Members, but for people at rave parties who are exposed to the risk of dehydration and fatigue in a context where drugs such as ecstasy are frequently taken. The Government find it impossible to encourage the provision of that particular facility, although they are allowed to encourage the provision of plentiful supplies of clean water, because to do the first would appear to condone drug-taking, whereas somehow to do the second is accepted from a health and safety point of view. That illustrates the tension between strategies designed to promote not taking drugs at all and those designed to deal with the fact that many people are taking drugs. That tension runs through the whole problem, including the issue concerning prescribing.

I find it particularly difficult that we receive quite conflicting advice from those who are dealing with addicts, or simply users of drugs, as opposed to those who are primarily involved in promoting a different approach to the issue and promoting abstinence. That is illustrative of the underlying questions which the White Paper does not even ask, let alone answer. Why do people abuse drugs? Why do so many young people abuse drugs? There are different answers for different age groups. How much is social and cultural? How much is in response to despair and hopelessness? The Scottish White Paper expressly admitted the link between such social and cultural factors. It said:

> "Drug misuse tends to flourish in conditions of deprivation, alienation and poverty of aspiration. It is particularly prevalent in some of the peripheral housing schemes in Scotland's cities."

Since that is true in Scotland, it cannot simply be untrue in England.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): Drug abuse is a problem right across the world; in third-world societies and in industrialised societies. It crosses every national boundary, every political system and every socio-economic group. That is the essence of the problem and to bring in such aspects as those to which the right hon. Gentleman refers, important though they may be, and to regard them as central to the whole area of drug abuse, is to misread the situation. The White Paper is of course attempting to address the situation as it is.

Mr. Beith: The hon. Gentleman is critical of his Government. I was quoting a statement of Government policy on drugs in Scotland, that drug misuse tends to flourish in conditions of deprivation. I agree that it flourishes under many other conditions, but one must look for some explanation of the prevalence of Friday and Saturday night drug abuse in the context of raves and other events in some of our cities, particularly in Scotland and northern England—where the problems are similar—and of the prevalence of other forms of drug abuse in areas of massive social deprivation and general hopelessness.

How much drug abuse, like alcohol abuse, is inevitable? We have never in centuries cured the still serious problem of alcohol abuse, which is involved in a

large proportion of violent crime in this country and the rest of Europe. Different strategies have failed to prevent it. What is most likely to discourage young people from taking drugs? What is likely to lead addicts and regular users to shake off their dependency on or frequent use of drugs? What role can the law play? It clearly fails to discourage large numbers of young people from taking drugs. There could not be so many possession offences recorded, let alone remain unrecorded, if large numbers of people were not influenced by the state of the law. If their attitudes are to change, they must be influenced in some other way.

Why do we view alcohol so differently? Why is not it part of this debate? Sometimes I wonder whether we still have an alcohol policy. It was once part of that policy, if not a very successful part, to control supply strictly by limiting retail outlets and licensing hours, but that has gone. The price issue is challenged by what is happening in Europe. A report published this week rightly argues that we should not be looking for a levelling down of alcohol taxation but for ways of ensuring that prices will not drop in countries that have high alcohol taxation, because there is ample evidence that lower prices would lead to increased alcohol use and abuse. There is a policy in relation to drink driving, and there was a recent announcement of possible further restraint on permitted alcohol levels in drivers. That is welcome, but is only one element of what should be broader policy.

Mr. Tony Banks: The right hon. Gentleman's comments about alcohol abuse are undoubtedly true but no one in his right mind would suggest criminalising the use of alcohol. We could not ban alcohol or make its consumption illegal. Why should cannabis, which does less damage to health than alcohol—[HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish."]—be selected as an illegal substance?

Mr. Beith: The United States tried to make alcohol illegal and called it prohibition. I am sorry to say that it did not work. It was not a successful method of dealing with the problem. One questions what would have happened if alcohol had been in the same position as cannabis when it was made the subject of legal restraint in this country. A different view might have been taken if alcohol had not been widely known or used before. Perhaps total prohibition would have been tried. Legal prohibition alone is not working in respect of cannabis, so we must find another way of persuading young people in particular that they should not embark upon its use and that it poses associated direct and indirect health risks.

I said before that a change in the law on cannabis would send a signal that might have a wide and more dangerous impact, even if such a change had no direct impact. People who are involved in one form or another of drug abuse ask, "Why is my form of drug abuse regarded as some kind of deviancy whereas other people can abuse alcohol or nicotine freely, without any prospect of legal penalty?" There is no sign that the White Paper process involved listening to or understanding drug abuses—particularly among young people—who do not understand why their action is treated as a form of deviancy and as being on a different level from widespread abuse of socially acceptable drugs.

One must understand the nature of the problem to find the solution. It is not sufficient simply to preach. Drug abuse of all kinds does immense harm, but we cannot tackle that harm unless we understand what causes the problem and work out realistically how and to what extent we can bring about change. A royal commission would be of considerable help in examining the fundamental issues.

I welcome the interdepartmental approach, the commitment shown and some of the things that can emerge. I have anxieties about key areas where resources may not be available—most notably education but also prisons and rehabilitation. I am glad that the Leader of the House tried to rescue the debate from the level of merely arguing whether or not cannabis should be legalised and to raise it to a serious and objective argument. There are much more fundamental issues that the White Paper has not begun to examine, but we cannot afford to delay dealing with matters such as drug trafficking or persuading young people to change their views towards drugs while we await the answers.

11.25 am

Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes (Wimbledon): Seldom in my time in the House have I witnessed such a thoroughly well-co-ordinated and speedy interdepartmental exercise as represented by the White Paper. Judging by the initial welcome given to my right hon. Friend the Lord President when he presented "Tackling Drugs Together" last month, that togetherness seems rightly to transcend party divisions. I say that in the context of the speech of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith).

The misuse of drugs is one of the most alarming issues of the day. Although hon. Members will have different priorities and viewpoints, the general aim is the same. The syndrome is all too recognisable, but the cure remains elusive. It is no exaggeration that the combination of corruption, crime and personal tragedy corrodes many of our basic values and constitutes a menace to society. Whether we approach the matter as politicians or as parents, the problems are formidable.

I claim no special expertise, save as a practising physician for a quarter of a century. Other people have studied the subject in much greater depth. Although mind-altering drugs have been used from the earliest of times, the variety of drugs available in the past 25 years—especially of synthetic drugs—and the sophistication of delivery in an increasingly prosperous world mean that the threat to communities and ultimately to civilisation has never been greater.

In the lectures on pharmacology that I attended, the properties of various drugs were discussed in academic terms, perhaps laced with a few historical allusions. There was precious little mention of the socially debilitating effects of those drugs. The inference was that a few dropouts were addicted to certain drugs, but there was no suggestion of a possible burgeoning in their volume and availability, which poses a serious worldwide threat. I trust that the ethos of such lectures has changed.

There is a sharp contrast between those sad addicts of a few years ago and the superficially glamorous image of the use of so-called recreational drugs by the young today. I take the opportunity to endorse the comments of both Front-Bench spokesmen in rejecting the wholly misguided legalisation lobby that has from time to time gained superficial credibility. The Government have every right to feel pride in taking the initiative in tackling a problem to which there are no easy answers.

[Dr. Charles Goodson-Wickes]

I shall concentrate on the slightly hackneyed medical principle that prevention is better than cure. Sadly, it is unrealistic to suppose that drug use can be eliminated. In that context, I welcome the extra funds from the Department of Health for the treatment of addicts. Progress can be made in tackling supply and demand. I had the opportunity to see at first hand measures to combat the drug trade emanating from South America. No one denies that the problem of drug trafficking, primarily of cocaine, is serious—whether the countries concerned contain primarily growers, processors or traders.

The House should never accept that the issue is too large to grapple with and is thus insuperable. For instance, in Colombia, I have seen international efforts involving American and British expertise, ranging from the pooling of intelligence to joint military and police action and the tracking of drug routes on a worldwide basis. Our drug liaison officers in six countries in South America, with links to colleagues in the Caribbean and the United States, do splendid work and their deployment is flexible enough to respond to the new situations that constantly arise as the sophistication of trafficking increases and new markets and even new crops develop.

There is a sinister trend away from violent gangs in that part of the world to cosmopolitan and professional sales and marketing corporations, fronted by apparently respectable business men with the usual gamut of professional advice in the shape of lawyers and accountants, who are now running much more insidious operations.

A manifestation of the apparent saturation of the cocaine market in the United States is the targeting of people with high disposable incomes elsewhere in the world, such as in Europe and Australasia, via countries as diverse as Nigeria and the Netherlands. If cocaine were the end product, the problem might be more easily containable, but the ease of conversion into crack, which is attractive to a different type of user and is closely related to inner-city crime in the United States and in more deprived parts of this country, is a formidable and frightening new aspect.

It is not only the use of cocaine that is on the increase, which is shown by consumption figures and seizure statistics, but that of heroin, whether from the golden triangle of Thailand, Burma and Malaysia, which primarily look to markets in north America, or from the golden crescent in Pakistan, Africa, Afghanistan and Iran, which is primarily directed to European markets.

While it is an inexact science to correlate the number of seizures with volumes and to detect trends, it is increasingly worrying that Customs and Excise inform me that United Kingdom seizures of 500 kg of heroin in the first quarter of 1995 are approaching the 640 kg seized throughout 1994. Such a pattern of increasing consumption is also seen with cannabis and synthetic drugs. The consignments are getting larger and another worrying new trend is the increasing use of former Soviet bloc countries, such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, as entry points into the European Community. That trend has become even more marked since the dangerous break-up of the former Yugoslavia, which has interrupted the other route through the Balkan states.

Whether cocaine comes in bitumen drums, pickled peaches or even within fresh flower consignments, or heroin is transported overland in continental lorries before being broken down into smaller consignments in countries such as the Netherlands, the key question must be addressed: is it really appropriate that the single market has made life so much easier for drug traffickers? A recent United Kingdom seizure crossed the so-called frontiers of no fewer than seven European Community countries. Let us consider the control of other criminal activities and the increasing problems of economic migration—is it right that we should be required to lower our border controls? I heard what my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House said and I welcome his endorsement of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister's assurance in the matter, but many Conservative Members will certainly be keeping an ever more vigilant watch. I am doubtful about the risk of undermining our increasingly sophisticated Customs and Excise and police operations, which are arguably the market leaders, on the altar of the aim of some spurious European unity, but I suspect that that is an issue for another day, Madam Speaker.

An expert has told me of the effect of what he described as a Pizza Express service developing, whereby the question, "Are you sorted?" can bring not only heroin and cocaine but amphetamines, ecstasy and cannabis to the door on virtually instant demand in certain parts of this country within 15 minutes. At present, that is primarily a problem in London and southern England, but—

Mr. George Howarth *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: I see that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman acknowledges that alarming pockets of use and trends are developing elsewhere.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), who chairs the excellent all-party committee on drug misuse, said, everyone is at risk. The best customer is often the young person living at home with a job and, therefore, a fairly reasonable disposable income. He or she is a prime target for the pushers.

I am not criticising our admirable enforcement agencies, whose powers and efficiency will, I hope, be enhanced by the current review of the structure and operation of our security services, including the Ministry of Defence, and increased funding of the national criminal intelligence service. The Drug Trafficking Act 1994 is working well, but increased worldwide intelligence and intervention can only stem the flow and can never stop it.

In conclusion, ultimately the Government's policy of combining education, awareness and guidance is the right one. The drugs struggle is apolitical and this enlightened initiative will be of immense benefit in the protection of future generations.

11.37 am

Ms Janet Anderson (Rossendale and Darwen): There can be no hon. Member in the House today who is not concerned about the problems associated with drug misuse. In some parts of the country, they would appear to have reached epidemic proportions. Every parent is worried about the impact of drug misuse on individuals and families and, indeed, on the communities in which they live.

Opposition Members have taken a positive approach to the White Paper and are pleased that many of our arguments have been accepted. There is a need for a

national strategy and for co-ordinated action. There is also an overwhelming need to increase community safety from drug-related crime. Recent estimates claim that a staggering 80 per cent. of crime may now be drug related. That equates with police estimates in my constituency.

It has been alleged to me that there is virtually no school playground in my constituency in which drugs of one sort or another are not available. Parents tell me that they will not allow their children to use the local playground because that is where drugs are peddled. There is one park in the Darwen part of my constituency which the local police claim is used regularly as a haunt for young people who are buying and selling drugs. It was even suggested to me the other day that there is an off-licence in the same area that is known locally to supply drugs to schoolchildren during their dinner hour. Everyone seems to know that that goes on.

In his introduction to the White Paper, the Prime Minister said:

"Containing the drugs problem is a long-term process. But this is not just a job for Government. Effective partnership to protect individuals and communities is the foundation. It is now time to turn this resolve and sense of common purpose into action."

He is quite right. Collective and community action, working in partnership with local communities, must be the answer, because those local communities are at the front line of the problem. Research shows that nearly 50 per cent. of our 15 and 16-year-olds have been offered drugs, and at least two thirds of all thefts are drug related. That is a problem of record proportions.

The Methodist Church has suggested that one answer to that problem may be to give drug addicts greater access to their chosen drugs under the supervision of general practitioners. It has proposed that long-term drug users would be healthier and less likely to fall into criminality if they were able to have realistic doses of their preferred drugs, taken in the way that they would like. Other people, as has already been mentioned by hon. Members today, suggest that legalisation or decriminalisation—of cannabis especially—may be of assistance.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) attempted to explain away what the Liberal Democrats did at their conference, but let us place it on the record. I have in my hand a copy of the resolution that was passed by that conference in 1994. It was quoted verbatim in the House on 15 February 1995 by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The resolution says clearly:

"Conference calls for:

The establishment of a Royal Commission to investigate and consider strategies for combating drug misuse, including:—

1. Greater resources to be given to HM Customs & Excise . . .

2. The police to be given more resources . . .

3. All schools to be obliged to offer advice and guidance to all pupils . . .

4. Immediate action to set up rehabilitation centres throughout the country;

5. Much stiffer penalties for all convicted drug dealers;

6. The decriminalisation of the use and possession of cannabis in order that . . . Customs & Excise are able to target their resources".—[*Official Report*, 15 February 1995; Vol. 254, c. 922.]

That was the resolution that was passed at the Liberal Democrat conference.

I invite the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed to tell us what he believes the opinions of the Liberal Democrat candidate in Littleborough and Saddleworth are about that issue. I understand, for example, that he is on record as favouring the legalisation of cannabis. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah".] Obviously the right hon. Gentleman wants to do some homework before he responds to that question. That approach may stem from the best of intentions, but it is misguided because it confuses two separate aspects of the problem.

Some people believe that soft drugs present no health problems, and that dealing with that aspect of the problem takes up too much police time and resources, so the answer must be to legalise or at least to decriminalise the use of soft drugs. I used to be tempted towards that approach. However, I recently had the opportunity, with the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and other members of the Home Affairs Select Committee, to visit Holland, where the police, as we know, have decided to turn a blind eye to soft drug indulgence. Indeed, in Amsterdam there are at least 100 "coffee shops" where young people—and those who use those coffee shops are overwhelmingly young people—are able to indulge their habit in relative freedom.

The problem with that approach is that it assumes that no serious health problems arise from the use of soft drugs and makes no attempt to tackle the problem of supply. One cannot accept that without recognising that one is ensuring a guaranteed market for soft drugs, to be exploited by organised crime. By their policy, the Amsterdam police are guaranteeing a market for people such as the Italian mafia and the organised crime groups rapidly growing in the Soviet Union—a guaranteed market for soft drugs. The profits from that market enable those people to establish funding for other, even more reprehensible activities.

We must not underestimate the criminal implications of those activities. When the Government introduced their White Paper to the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor) said:

"The effects of drug-related crime and a drug culture are undermining the potential of our young people, pervading every community and devastating some."—[*Official Report*, 10 May 1995; Vol. 259, c. 749.]

That is why the Labour party opposes the legalisation of cannabis. Debate about the legalisation of cannabis can only serve as a distraction from the real issues—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] We must do more to alert young people to the dangers. The funding made available to schools should certainly be sustained. The figure of £240 a school is not very much, but it is better than nothing, and I hope that the Government will not seek to cut that.

Most important, action to tackle that problem, and the drug-related crime problem associated with it, must be taken at local level by means of a partnership approach among all the local agencies, to develop and implement policies to reduce drug misuse.

We all welcome the debate today. I have been proud to take part in a debate in which there has been such consensus on both sides of the House about the need for a general strategy to tackle this important issue.

Finally, if there is one reason above all why we must do something about this problem, it is because it especially affects our young people. I have three teenage children. Touch wood, none of them has yet been attracted by that type of substance abuse. I hope that they never will be, and I look forward to our working together to tackle the problem and to ensure that our young children are protected.

11.45 am

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): I join colleagues in thanking the Lord President for finding time for this important debate. I place on the record, for those who are involved with the procedures of this place, that as it is a popular debate in which many people wish to speak, I think the point of order that I raised regarding private notice questions is relevant.

Earlier this week, we held a debate which lasted until 10 o'clock in which there were very few speakers indeed. I cannot recall what it was about, but I see that the Lord President recalls the one that I mean. Today we have a debate in which many people wish to speak, perhaps at some length. I make no criticism of the private notice question—there is nothing wrong with that—but we must find ways of introducing more flexibility into our procedures so that we do not have so much time wasting, with people preparing speeches and then in one way or another being frankly messed about by the procedures. I hope that the Lord President and everyone else involved with our procedures will give a little thought to the difficulties which can arise as a result of those sudden changes.

I was interested to hear the speech of the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson), which confirmed the positive and consensual approach expressed by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth). Those and other Opposition Members are right to say that we must tackle the problem as a national one, and as far as possible adopt a cross-party approach to it. I also welcome to some extent the remarks of the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith), who at least said that he personally was going along with that consensus. However, he has a problem with his party and it was fascinating to hear the little dialogue between new Labour and old Liberal on that. The right hon. Gentleman seems to have some difficulty there, although I suspect that he agrees with the general consensus that is emerging, even on the subject of legalisation of cannabis.

Mr. Beith: Before the hon. Gentleman gets too excited, he should remember that my Conservative predecessor as Member of Parliament for Berwick-upon-Tweed was convicted and fined for possession of cannabis.

Mr. Thompson: The debate about the legalisation of cannabis cuts across party lines, as the hon. Member for Knowsley, North pointed out. However, I shall return to that point in a moment.

I fully support the Government's strategy for the next three years as outlined in the White Paper, "Tackling Drugs Together," and as described by the Lord President. Therefore, I shall not go over that ground again in my speech. I think that it is a good initiative which the Government are following up vigorously.

This morning I shall refer to two main issues, the first of which is local. I said earlier, by way of intervention, that Norfolk has taken a lead in combating drug abuse. I congratulate those authorities in Norfolk which have done excellent work in that area. I am delighted to see that my hon. Friend the Minister from the Department of Education has arrived at an opportune moment as I wish to refer to the work that the Government are doing and can do in schools to address the serious drug problem.

I was pleased that the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen referred to the way in which drugs affect young people. There is no worse crime than that perpetrated by those who profiteer in substances which do so much harm to our young people. That is one of the reasons why so many hon. Members wish to take part in this important debate.

I put on record a fact which must be obvious from my remarks: I am firmly opposed to any campaign to legalise cannabis or any other drug of that nature. The ongoing debate between the libertarian and the more authoritarian approaches cuts across the party divide. Those who know me will recognise that I come down firmly on the side of the authoritarians, probably because I am an ex-schoolmaster. I cannot help it: I tend to side with those who want to control and intervene—although, I hasten to add, not in the way that the Opposition propose. I am an authoritarian, not a libertarian.

I recently read John Stuart Mill, which I do not do as regularly as I should—my hon. Friends will be delighted to hear that I do not intend to quote him—and decided that I do not support the sentiments that people like him have expressed. I know that some people will understand what I mean. I totally reject the libertarian arguments with regard to drugs and I will not develop them further. In this country we are confronted by the problem of how to address the questions of authority and discipline—whether it be internal discipline or self-discipline. We face a crisis in this country as far as authority and discipline are concerned; it is not a party matter.

One day politicians must address the issue of how our society and culture deals with drugs. Some hon. Members have referred to that point this morning. I do not intend to initiate a debate about the Church of England, but even it faces a crisis in trying to decide whether it has authority or whether it is merely responding to general public pressure. I know which side I am on in that debate, but I shall develop that point on other and better occasions.

I shall skip the part of my speech about John Stuart Mill—much to everyone's relief—and turn to the question of drug abuse among young people. I raised that issue on an Adjournment debate as long ago as 1989. I recommend that my colleagues never read Adjournment speeches that they made a long time ago, as I was horrified by what I had said and the way in which I had said it. However, I made several good points and I referred to the need to protect our young people from the growing drugs threat. We have heard today that the threat is still growing.

The then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Department of Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Coventry, South-West (Mr. Butcher)—who has a constituency that is almost identical to mine and with whom I often compare constituency issues—made an excellent reply to my Adjournment speech. He proposed a very good 10-point plan for schools which aimed to reduce demand for drugs. That has been followed by a succession of very good Department of Education initiatives—including the most recent strategy document that I shall refer to in a moment if there is time—which have culminated in today's debate.

Norfolk has taken a lead in combating drug abuse—this is not just a Member of Parliament giving a puff for his own constituency. Norfolk adopted the inter-agency approach as early as 1990. I pay tribute to the east Norfolk and north-west Anglia health commissions, the police, the local education authorities, the probation service and all of the voluntary organisations that have been involved with that measure. The White Paper was published only last month, but the Norfolk drug action team—the teams

are referred to in the White Paper—has been established already. It will have responsibility for the entire county and it plans to meet on 17 July to discuss a strategic co-ordinated approach to education, prevention, treatment, law enforcement and rehabilitation issues. The Government are right to emphasise the co-ordinated inter-agency approach, which I cannot support too strongly.

Norfolk's response has been excellent, and the authorities in the area have been the pathfinders on the issue. In particular, the Norfolk education service has produced guidelines for schools. There is not time for me to give details of them, but I can certainly recommend them. I hope that my hon. Friend can confirm that the guidelines have been put forward as examples of good practice to be followed by schools up and down the land. I hope that Norfolk's example can be followed nationally.

It is important to pay tribute also to the police in Norfolk. I would particularly like to commend the work of the crime prevention panel, which has kindly provided me with some information that is appropriate to the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) talked about the national trend in drug seizures. Norfolk's figures are 811 in 1992, 1,028 in 1993 and 1,551 in 1994, giving increases in successive years of 27 per cent., and then 50 per cent. That surely confirms what my hon. Friend said.

Dr. Goodson-Wickes *indicated assent.*

Mr. Thompson: I see the my hon. Friend agrees. That there is an increasing trend is confirmed by those figures. There was a recent seizure of cannabis in Norfolk with a street value of some £200,000. Fortunately, the offenders concerned were arrested in that case. That is good news, but it is all part of the increasing trend about which we are so concerned. The police are doing an excellent job as far as that is concerned.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed referred to voluntary organisations, and gave the example of rotary clubs. One good example to which I should like to refer in passing is the Norwich rotary club's DrugBuster '95 initiative, which was given publicity this week in the local press. The idea of the initiative is to have a drug awareness campaign aimed at year seven in our schools—that is 11 to 12-year-olds.

Earlier speakers, including my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway), referred to the distressingly low age at which drug abuse first appears. That has been confirmed by recent surveys. The rotary club is addressing the 11 to 12-year-old group in particular and, in doing so, have taken advice from the police, teachers and the Matthew project and other voluntary organisations in Norwich. The rotary club has said it was astonished to find the extent of drug abuse in the area, and they felt that it should support initiatives within schools—including short plays and designing tee-shirts—to help. While I do not wish to go into detail, it is a worthwhile initiative and many others are taking place as well.

Finally, I wish to refer to a survey called "Cracking Drugs in Schools" produced by the Professional Association of Teachers. At this point, I must declare an interest as a consultant or adviser to that association. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone) referred to that survey in his excellent speech as well. It is relevant to the debate, and particularly to those concerned about what is happening among young people in schools.

There were some 483 responses to the survey, which was conducted over a wide geographical area in primary and secondary schools, and in further education establishments. I wish to highlight some of the points which came out of the survey, as they relate to remarks made earlier in the debate. First, the feeling among teachers is that the general culture of this country—including the conduct of the media—is part of the problem.

The survey also mentioned role models for our young people. I could get carried away on this subject—but I will not, because everyone else wants to speak. Society is offering our young people the wrong sort of role models: so much is clear from the survey.

Another point to emerge from the survey is the idea that we should not forget about alcohol and tobacco while we concentrate on drugs in schools. They, too, constitute a serious problem. So I go along with those who say that we should not push alcohol and tobacco to one side as being of no importance just because we are debating other drugs.

The survey confirmed what my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South said—that drug misuse in primary schools is significant and growing. It also showed that teachers want more and better training. I know that there is cross-party agreement on that point.

Tremendous support for the way police are helping schools was clear from the survey, but there was some concern that there might be a confusion between their role as advisers and their role in enforcing the law when serious offences are committed. There may be a need for clarification in that area. I think that the Minister of State is aware of the wish for clarification of the legal position of teachers who try to deal with incidents of drug misuse in schools, and I know that the Department is responding to that wish.

Finally, the survey pointed out that there is no real distinction, in this context, between the inner cities and rural areas. This is a national problem. The survey concluded that all schools should have a drugs education policy and a drugs incidents policy. At the moment, only 40 per cent. even of secondary schools and further education colleges have such policies. The teachers surveyed also felt that the law governing the sale of alcohol to minors should be more strictly enforced. More controversially, they suggest a ban on cigarette advertising within range of schools. All these points need to be thought about and debated.

I promised to be brief, so I will conclude by saying that we must continue the debate between the disciplinarians or authoritarians and the libertarians. There may be other opportunities to develop that debate, so that we can move on to a more creative, more fulfilled and happier society, in which there are fewer family break-ups, with all their attendant problems. I agree with those who have talked about training for 14 to 16-year-olds—the hon. Member for Knowsley, North made some good points about them.

We are all involved—not just parliamentarians but leaders of society and the media. I hope that this debate will issue in a national discussion of this important subject, because we are holding the debate for the sake of our young people.

12.2 pm

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): I represent an inner-city constituency in London with one of the most serious drug problems in the country. Anyone who is as close to the crisis caused by drugs as my constituents and I are must question whether the Government are yet taking the problem seriously enough. It is hard to disagree with the detail of much of the White Paper, but in my view it is a well-meaning but essentially bureaucratic response to a problem with complex economic and social roots which the document does not begin to touch.

It has been rightly said that drugs are a nationwide problem, but they are especially a problem for the inner city. The British crime survey showed that, whereas in the inner cities 16 per cent. of 14 to 15-year-olds had experimented with drugs, in rural areas only 7 per cent. had done so. I shall talk briefly about my experience of dealing with and working with the consequences of drug abuse in an area such as Stoke Newington. It is easy to discuss the issue in the abstract, but I want to talk about what the drug epidemic in our inner city means in terms of the cost in human lives. Week after week in my surgery, I see middle-aged women who may have worked all their lives and have seen their sons destroyed by the drugs trade. Many young men and women get involved with drugs because drugs are fashionable, glamorous and seen as a high road to money. The reality for 99 per cent. of them is that their lives are ruined. If they are fortunate, they keep out of prison or mental hospital but, increasingly, the prisons and mental homes around London are full of the victims of the drug epidemic in the inner city.

There is also the environmental cost to the inner city. It cannot be acceptable that law-abiding people who live on council estates have to walk past drug peddlers to go to the shops or post office. On the same landing as those people live on, there may be a council flat entirely given over to drug retailing. In areas such as the east end of London, it does not matter whether one knows anyone taking or dealing in drugs; on many of our estates, it is hard to escape the environmental consequences of the drug trade, whether they be syringes in the sand pit at Clissold park in Stoke Newington or drug dealers on the street corner. That is the reality that the House must address.

One of the biggest costs that my constituents pay because of the drug trade is the cost of crime. To feed a hard drug habit nowadays can cost up to £1,000 a week. Where do people get the money? They get it from crime. Surveys show that over a third of crack users make the money to buy drugs through dealing. There is a tendency in the House to distinguish between dealers and users, but all too often they are the same people. A third of crack users get the money through dealing, a quarter through theft and one in seven through prostitution. Many of the petty burglaries, mindless assaults and much of the street crime in many parts of the inner city are caused by people trying to feed a drug habit.

Even worse than the cost in human lives or of having to push a baby in a buggy past drug dealers on Stoke Newington High street and worse than the crime is the rising incidence of violence and the increasing number of people armed with guns who are connected with drug distribution in London. In 1993, there were 10 murders and 21 attempted murders associated with the crack cocaine trade alone. Those figures are spiralling. The problem is that many of the young men—it is mainly young men—who go armed in the pursuance of drug distribution also use guns for all sorts of relatively petty domestic altercations. That frightens me because I live in the community. I am not talking about people from a report or what I have read about, but about my friends' and relatives' children. The rising number of young men involved with drugs in inner London and other inner cities who are armed with guns is a direct consequence of the drug epidemic in our big cities.

I cannot argue with much of the detail of the White Paper, but it does not begin to constitute an effective response to the drugs crisis that is engulfing some of our communities. Many hon. Members want to speak, so I will not expand my remarks.

Any effective response must seriously consider why people take drugs in the first place. The reasons are complex. I believe that some people have an addictive personality. Style, fashion, and street credibility are involved. Conservative Members have tried to challenge this, but there is no question that drug abuse is often connected with conditions of poverty and despair. Conservative Members do not like this, but we have to face the fact that, sadly, many young men in our inner cities regard dealing and trading in drugs as a viable economic route out of poverty. I do not condone that, but it is a reality. To talk about a little money here for education, about a few leaflets there and about meetings with chief executives and directors of social services does not begin to address the reality of young men who see drug dealing as their only route to acquiring the material trappings to which they believe that they are entitled. Until we have a strategy against drugs which takes that point on board and deals with it, we are far from having an effective strategy.

There is little point in dealing with the drug epidemic in narrow terms of education and meetings of bureaucrats without lifting our sights overseas to where the drugs are produced. The major drug production areas are some of the poorest countries in the world. Some of the most heavily indebted third-world countries are also the countries most heavily involved in drug production. It is in countries where the prices of traditional agricultural products such as sugar, bananas and coffee have collapsed that the rural agriculturists turn to drug production. It is no use Ministers telling me that they are serious about the war on drugs when their colleagues across Whitehall are pursuing trade, economic and aid policies that encourage thousands of small agriculturists to turn to drugs production.

What are we to say to small farmers in the rural Caribbean or in South America? They see that the price of coffee has collapsed and that there is no market for their bananas and sugar. They see that their only means of feeding and clothing their children and of making a life is through drug production. If this country is serious about the war on drugs, we have to tie in what we do about trade and third-world poverty with what we do here about drugs.

We also have to look at the territories that are used not primarily for drug production, but for transhipment. When one goes to some of the islands in the Caribbean and sees the relatively aged boats that the customs men have to use to chase the drug dealers compared with the state-of-the-art speedboats and helicopters that the drug

dealers have, it is no surprise that the islands are increasingly used as transhipment points. Again, if we are serious, we have to start by trying to choke off the drugs trade not only at the point of production, but at the point of transhipment. A lot of money could usefully be spent on ensuring that the Customs and Excise men of the islands that are used as transhipment points have exactly the same high-tech boats, helicopters and equipment to stop the drugs coming through their borders as the drug dealers do.

I now come to what we are doing in the United Kingdom. There must be more money for Customs and Excise and more money for staffing to enable Customs and Excise staff to deal effectively with the drugs coming through our borders. We also need to look overall at the resources that we give to the drug problem. The Government talk about 4 per cent. of new resources; yet addiction has increased by 13 per cent. Offences related to drugs have increased by 11 per cent. No one in this debate has raised the question of the relationship between drug abuse in London and homelessness. We must look at the fact that 80 per cent. of drug users in London are unemployed. I am not saying that unemployment and homelessness lead directly to drug abuse, but for Ministers to say that they are serious about the drug problem when they do not look at that statistical relationship makes me wonder.

Especially in relation to women drug abusers, we must also look at the relationship between drug use and child abuse. One London clinic looked at a group of women drug addicts with whom it was dealing and found that 36 per cent. of those drug addicts were the victims of sexual abuse. The problem with this debate and the problem with the White Paper is that they look at the drug problem in narrow, theoretical and bureaucratic terms. In fact, this is a problem with global implications and complex social causes.

As well as giving resources to Customs and Excise and as well as trying to see the links with problems such as homelessness, we need to consider more resources for the police. Increasingly, the police are able to track down drug dealers only by using more and more resources and more and more money. Drug users are to the forefront in using new technology. Anyone who walks down Stoke Newington high street on a sunny day will see more expensive portable phones used by more people than he or she will ever see using them in the City of London. It is no longer a matter of policemen standing on street corners and saying, "You're nicked." They often have to set up prolonged surveillance arrangements. They have to undertake prolonged undercover work. They use video cameras to record transactions. They have to obtain corroborative evidence that will stand up in court. All those things cost money, and budgets are being stretched.

It is no use having White Papers which tell us that a little more money should be provided for education. If we are to counter the multi-million-pound trade, we must make the necessary money available for the countervailing agencies, including Customs and Excise and the police.

I live in an area in which the drug epidemic causes human tragedy day on day. I have had the opportunity to travel to America to visit its inner cities and to see the devastation wrought by drug misuse in areas such as Harlem, parts of Chicago and parts of Washington. In Harlem, hundreds of babies are born every month addicted to crack. I do not want to see the tragedy that has engulfed the inner cities of the United States engulf my people and my community in the east end of London, or in any of our inner cities.

We cannot argue with the White Paper as it stands, but if the Government were serious about fighting drugs they would put forward a far more widely encompassing strategy and would take on board some of the economic and social matters that I have mentioned. It is easy to talk about drug abuse in theory, to read reports and to blame others. The experience in America is that when the problem comes out of the ghetto and engulfs the children of the middle and professional classes, it is too late. I hope that the House will not wait until it is too late before embarking on a serious strategy and war against drugs.

12.16 pm

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Lord President. He has pulled the entire process together by the production of the Green Paper, the initiation of the consultation process and the publication of the White Paper. On behalf of all my colleagues, I pay tribute to him for his critical role.

I pay tribute also to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), who for years has talked about drug issues in this place and outside, sometimes in a lonely way. The fact that the debate is taking place and the White Paper has been published is in large measure due to his efforts over many years.

The White Paper has a stated purpose, which I shall read out again. It states:

> "To take effective action by vigorous law enforcement, accessible treatment and a new emphasis on education and prevention to: increase the safety of communities from drug-related crime; reduce the acceptability and availability of drugs to young people; and reduce the health risks and other damage related to drug misuse."

I shall consider these three important and interdependent courses of action in turn.

There is no doubt that we have a rising incidence of drugs throughout the industrialised world, especially among young people under the age of 25. We have heard that 70 per cent. of crime is now drug related. In the United Kingdom, the value of the drug marketplace is over £3 billion. We have gangs involved, including Chinese triads, Jamaican yardies and gangs from Nigeria and the eastern Europe mafiosi. There is a huge commercial impetus to sell drugs to our young people.

There may be different geographic and different socio-economic groups, but drug abuse is now prevalent throughout the nation in all sectors of our society, and especially among young people. That applies in the metropolitan areas and in rural areas. I know that crime, whether in towns, villages or farms, is now very much linked to the consumption of drugs.

I very much welcome the fact that there are now defined targets for chief constables to draw up formal drugs strategies, to modify their operational procedures under an umbrella of national priorities. Undoubtedly, the White Paper will be a spur to chief constables to work closely with Customs and Excise, and, indeed, the National Criminal Intelligence Service. We must not forget the role of the National Criminal Intelligence Service. Many of its operatives live—and are stationed—abroad in the countries from which the supply comes.

[Mr. Richard Spring]

They have a critical role in looking at what is going on in those countries and also to observe the supply centres. That is highly important intelligence. Although there is a certain amount of integrated working together in the enforcement agencies, the White Paper will spur that on in a most satisfactory way. It is vital, given the staggering profits that are available to drugs merchandisers, that good intelligence is obtained about the movement of drugs before they reach Britain.

The second element of the statement of purpose refers to the

"acceptability and availability of drugs to young people."

The third element is about the health risk. A distinction is made, in the minds of some people, between soft and hard drugs, but it is an ever more superficial observation. Cannabis can no longer be regarded as some kind of safe non-addictive substance. The questions are these: is it somehow safe to take? Is there no health risk? Is it a merely recreational exercise? The fact is that the White Paper—the Green Paper having looked at the arguments—has come down with a view against decriminalisation.

I have spoken to a number of psychologists who are involved in this area. One individual described the situation thus. If one has a vulnerable personality, one is prone to phobias or anxieties. Given the fact that, after consumption, cannabis resides in the body for up to 30 days, there is emerging evidence that individuals who are prone to such disorders can be pushed over into more extreme states and even to schizophrenia by cannabis consumption. That is the psychological side.

On the physical side, there is increasing and frightening evidence of a cancer-cannabis link. We have evidence from distinguished surgeons in the United States, particularly in California, that shows aggressive head, neck and lung cancers occurring in young people who are taking cannabis as a drug. Evidence also shows that middle-aged people are becoming prone to that form of cancer 15 to 20 years earlier than the average of those who normally get that cancer.

It is suggested, in the *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* in the United States that three quarters of lung cancer patients are cannabis smokers. The reason is simple: cannabis contains 50 per cent. to 70 per cent. more carcinogens than tobacco does. The tragedy is that the process is slow. The World Health Organisation is now so alarmed about the cannabis-cancer link that it is investigating it and has already indicated that it believes that one joint of cannabis is equivalent to four cigarettes.

Mr. Tony Banks: It is quite possible, of course, that the interaction between cannabis and nicotine leads to precisely the results that the hon. Gentleman is talking about, but will he go back slightly? He was talking about people getting hooked on cannabis. No hon. Member in the House has ever said that he or she has taken cannabis, yet we know, privately—never publicly—that some hon. Members have said that they have. I have not noticed them being hooked. Has the hon. Gentleman ever in his life smoked cannabis or ingested it in any way?

Mr. Spring: The hon. Gentleman raises a point that needs to be dealt with. In the north Wealden district of East Sussex, it was shown that 20 per cent. of teenagers had tried cannabis. On the basis of that evidence, it was established that 5 per cent. in turn moved on to hard drugs.

There is increasing evidence of a cancer-cannabis link and we have potentially a time bomb in our midst. Young people who are taking cannabis may unexpectedly get cancer in middle age. There is evidence of that in California. We owe it to young people to reduce the acceptability and availability of drugs because of those real health risks.

Many members of the public will know that there is considerable concern that prisons have become a breeding ground for the taking of drugs, enriching not only prisoners who may be suppliers but outside suppliers. I therefore welcome the random urine tests that will be introduced by the Prison Service. That will act as a powerful disincentive, and appropriate sanctions will be taken against prisoners who are found to have drugs.

Of course the rehabilitation of prisoners is important—that is the other side of the coin. It is also vital, however—this is what the White Paper is spurring on in the Prison Service—that there are increasing moves to stop drugs from getting into prisons in the first place by the increased use of drug dogs and by closed visits. That is extremely welcome, as anxiety exists in many communities about released prisoners who have become hooked on drugs.

I also pay tribute to the excellent work of the central drugs co-ordination unit and, in particular, the director Sue Street. I am delighted with the comment of my right hon. Friend the Lord President that their role will continue after their remit ends next year.

On continuity, I should like some clarity on one point. To what extent will drug action teams respond to the voluntary sector at local level and who will monitor that? That is a critical part of the success of what the White Paper proposes.

As I said earlier, it is true that drug abuse exists both in metropolitan and rural areas. In East Anglia, for example in the county of Suffolk, we have the particular problem of amphetamines in the Newmarket area, whereas we have the problem of heroin in Ipswich. That is why I especially welcome the fact that existing drugs task forces that are operating successfully are being encouraged to incorporate themselves in a flexible way in drug action teams and drug reference groups.

Two years ago, I founded a drugs task force in Newmarket in my constituency. We have had considerable success via the two youth outreach workers who work with the drug task force in going into the community, talking to young people, finding out about their problems and, where they have specific difficulties, guiding them on to seek appropriate professional help. I welcome the fact that a drugs task group similar to the one that was set up in Newmarket two years ago has been set up in Bury St. Edmunds.

Much of the support for both those two drugs task groups has come from two local district councils—Forest Heath and St. Edmundsbury. Jointly with those district councils, we have hired a substance misuse training officer to talk to private organisations, schools and other bodies to raise the level of awareness and the training of individuals who will then talk to young people. I hope that all that will be included in the plan that will be brought forward by Suffolk health authority to deal with drugs in the county overall. I congratulate the two district

councils in my constituency on their foresight and the moral and financial support they have given to those drug task groups.

I have discussed the problems of young people with many school heads in my constituency and it is fair to say that, before the publication of the Green and White Papers, many school heads, teachers and governors felt that they were operating without a sense of direction. Many were embarrassed if there were incidents of drug misuse in their schools because they did not know how to react. I therefore welcome the fact that even at primary school level young people will be warned about the dangers of drug misuse. By the time they leave school, young people will now have a comprehensive idea of the dangers of illegal drugs.

The school health education unit surveyed 100,000 children and found that the number who experiment with illegal drugs is now six times greater than the number recorded in the four years to 1993. That is a shocking statistic. I welcome, therefore, the creation of the digest as a single source of reference for teachers on agreed standards and procedures in schools. I am glad that, in future, the standard of drug education in schools will be subject to inspection. I am aware that the national curriculum already requires pupils studying science to learn about the harmful effects of drugs.

Concurrent with the White Paper proposals, I particularly welcome the rekindling of interest in sports in schools, because drugs misuse must be seen in the context of prevention and higher standards of health and fitness among young people.

As has already been said, the problem of irregularity of drug supply in rural areas exacerbates drug misuse there. Sometimes young people in my constituency are offered harder drugs when cannabis is not readily available. That practice has been responsible, particularly in rural areas, for some of the 1,200 deaths recorded in England and Wales as a result of drug abuse. Young people in rural areas have stolen a pig tranquilliser—which has dangerous effect on them—such is their desire to get hold of drugs if they cannot get any cannabis. The desire to get a kick out of drugs is prevalent throughout the country.

When one looks for role models from the world as to how to set about successfully tackling the tragic problem of drug misuse, Canada has hitherto been the best example. Under the umbrella of a national strategy, it has developed local community partnerships. That is precisely what the White Paper intends to foster through the use of local communities and the motivation of local people to deal with the problem of drug misuse.

Much of the success in tackling the problem in Suffolk is due to the moral and financial support given by the district councils. I am therefore disappointed to see that district councils are excluded from the drug action teams and that they have been given no specific role in drug reference groups. The White Paper recommends local adjustments, but, in reality, county councils are often remote from their constituents. Those living in west Suffolk feel remote from the county council headquarters at Ipswich; they look to the district council as their source of reference. I wanted to mention that given my experience of the success achieved by my district councils.

I have the honour to be patron of Adfam in Suffolk, which was founded in 1987 by Lilias and Robin Sheepshanks, to whom I pay tribute. They have sought to help families and friends sort out the tragic consequences of a young person's drug misuse. The scheme has been very successful. I am very pleased that family counselling has been brought to light in the White Paper. One of the points that Adfam made was that, although a national help line has been suggested, a local help line, perhaps regionally based, would be better, simply because of its geographic familiarity—a comforting regional voice, perhaps—and the fact that it would more easily provide an opportunity for home visits. I hope that that idea will be borne in mind.

I have talked about the cancer-cannabis link and its extreme dangers. Adfam has said—the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) will be interested in this point—that all the evidence in the eight years that it has been going and all the contact that it has had with families and drug abusers suggest that all heroin addicts, or those on large methadone maintenance programmes, started with cannabis. The habit of smoking cannabis can lead to criminal activity too, as we have heard.

In the past two years, we have come a long way in looking at the problem of drugs. We are now considering not only enforcement, important as that may be, but prevention and education. I pay tribute once again to my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and also to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who has taken a special interest in drugs misuse and highlighted the subject at a pan-European level. I hope and believe that the White Paper will be an important stepping stone in dealing with the tragedy and cancer of drugs misuse in this country. Parents and young people will look back at the White Paper as a very important step in fighting the tide of drugs misuse, which so tragically destroys so many lives in Britain.

12.36 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I should like to comment on the White Paper, which seems perfectly reasonable in the context of this debate. In it, one sees the priorities that the Government give to objectives. Their first priority seems to be crime, followed, of course, by drug education and public health. In this country, and indeed in the United States—one must make the comparison—drug use is increasingly being viewed as a law and order issue. If drug use is treated as a matter of law and order—that, essentially, is the Government's approach—it becomes a battle. We are clearly losing that battle and we shall continue to do so. We spend about £500 million a year on law enforcement connected with drug use, yet we all admit that drug use is on increase in this country. No one has said that it is not. If a war is being waged against drugs, we are losing it.

The figures in the United States are absolutely horrendous. If one wants to see what will happen in this country in five or 10 years, one need look not into a crystal ball but at what is happening in the United States. Given many of the things currently happening in the United States, there are good reasons to be very worried about future developments in this country.

In the United States, $20 billion a year is spent on law enforcement concerning drug use, yet more drugs are available, they are cheaper on the streets and more people are using them. In this country and in the United States, the police acknowledge that they are losing the so-called drugs war.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Where is the sense in putting more and more people in gaol for drug abuse? In the United States, 440,000 prisoners are in local gaols for drug offences, 87,000 are in federal gaols, 2.7 million people are on probation and 500,000 are on parole. Those figures represent the highest proportion ever of the American population incarcerated for drug offences, and the highest proportion of gaoled persons anywhere in the world. In 1992, 535,000 people in the United States were arrested for cannabis possession, sale or manufacture. Seventy per cent. of the country's entire gaol population have been imprisoned for drug-related offences. I tried to discover the comparable figure for the UK. The Government say that perhaps 10 per cent. of the prison population is accounted for by drug-related offenders—but only directly related, in terms of drug use or dealing.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), in an excellent speech, described the situation in her part of east London, which is similar to that in Newham but probably worse. She spoke of all the other crimes associated with drugs, such as burglary and car theft. When people appear before the courts for such offences, no one asks why they committed them. If that question were asked, perhaps the number of people in prison here for offences tangential to the supply and use of drugs would approach the United States' figure of 60 per cent. or 70 per cent. It seems that drugs are freely available within prisons. It is ludicrous that to stop people taking drugs we put them in gaol, where drugs are just as readily available.

It seems from the White Paper that far more resources should be made available for drug education. Will the Minister confirm that the standing conference on drug abuse budget will be maintained? I was told that it might be eliminated. I must press the Minister to answer that important question. The figures in the White Paper suggest that the Government will make available £10 million of additional resources, but for short-term objectives when guaranteed core funding is essential. Much more must be spent on drug education and reduction. If the Government and Parliament are serious, we must stop thinking of drugs as a law and order issue and more as a matter of education and reduction.

Teachers are not the best people to provide such education because it is difficult for them to relate to the pupils in their charge. More use should be made of drug advice projects such as that in Newham, and the three Members of Parliament representing Newham are in the Chamber. I hope that the Lord President will pay that project a visit—my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) plans to do so. Drug advice projects have the help of young people who still use drugs and can impart good knowledge, or who have kicked the habit. They can all relate to present users. One problem associated with drug education is that it is difficult for a youngster to discuss with his or her teacher doing something that is illegal. Drug advice projects are the best way to help young people to kick their habit.

I have never used drugs myself, despite arguing continually for legalisation, and would never encourage anyone to use them, but hon. Members who argue that using cannabis leads inevitably to harder drugs should examine their consciences. How many hon. Members in the Chamber now have used drugs? If I asked hon. Members to raise their hands, I doubt that any would. I would not raise my hand because of the assurance that I have just given the House, but how many other hon. Members could do the same? That is not a way of catching people out. All that I am asking hon. Members to say—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. In case anyone is tempted, I should say that it would not be in order for hon. Members to put their hands up.

Mr. Banks: The cavalry has obviously arrived—hon. Members were worried about what was going to happen next.

My point is, how many Members here or of the 650 or so who are in the House who have used cannabis have ended up becoming drug addicts? If they were capable of controlling the habit, why should they assume that other people are not capable of doing so? They say that using cannabis takes one on to harder drugs. For obsessive individuals, that is true, but it is equally true that if one has a dry sherry, one could end up drinking methylated spirits on the Embankment—the people who are there probably started off with a beer or a dry sherry—but it does not mean that, because one drinks a dry sherry or a beer, one will inevitably become an alcoholic. One must think this through logically.

I want drug use to be controlled and reduced and I want the criminal activity associated with drug supply and use eliminated. The only way to secure all those three socially desirable objectives is through legalisation, certainly of cannabis, and possibly of all drugs.

I admit that I do not know enough about the medical problems associated with the use of drugs—I have never taken them, so I cannot even speak from personal experience—but I agree with the Liberal Democrats' position. It seems entirely sensible to me that a royal commission, or at least a body of sufficient standing, should examine all the arguments for and against—the medical, social and enforcement arguments—so that legislators can take decisions based on the full facts and not on their own prejudices or on anecdotal evidence.

Mr. Ottaway: Why does the hon. Gentleman think that legalising the use of cannabis will result in a reduction in its use?

Mr. Banks: It does not necessarily follow that it will lead to a reduction. Initially, it could lead to an expansion of cannabis use. My arguments are that, if someone wants to use cannabis, it is a personal decision. Far more damage to a person's health is caused by nicotine, smoking cigarettes and alcohol. Once a substance is legalised, it enables us to regulate the quality, put in place far more drug reduction schemes and give far more advice. As it is a legal activity, one can reduce use, as we do with cigarettes. It is difficult to reduce use when it is illegal,

other than through law and order issues. As we have already seen, as a law and order issue we are losing the war.

Mr. George Howarth: My hon. Friend is advancing a not unfamiliar argument for him, but it is normally his practice to differentiate between his position and that of his party. Perhaps he might care to do so on this occasion.

Mr. Banks: In case anyone did not read the health warning that I should have had stamped across my forehead, no word that I have uttered so far has anything to do with the official Front-Bench policy of the Labour party, but I am quite used to giving that health warning for many of the things that I say in the House.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My hon. Friend is right to say that this is a big issue in east London. I do not go along with his remedy, but does he agree that something fundamental has not been mentioned? Everyone requires some recreation and relaxation—I would put in a hyphen and call it re-creation—but in a community or society in which people find a balance more difficult to achieve because of market forces, insecurity and the ease of commodity availability, the demand for drugs as opposed to other things that provide healthy relaxation and re-creation goes up. We must bear that in mind, because many Conservative policies increase people's demand for a commodity that gives them recreation and relaxation, rather than getting them through their lives as a whole.

Mr. Banks: My hon. Friend is saying that there are many more complex reasons associated with drug demand. My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington made the same argument. The White Paper does not tackle any of the basic causes. I accept that that was not its purpose. However, unless one is able to start understanding why people use drugs, drink alcohol to excess or even smoke cigarettes, because there is a reason for all those things—

Mr. Spearing: They are relaxants.

Mr. Banks: They are relaxants, stimulants or whatever. All those matters need to be examined if we are to solve the "problem", as it is identified.

If all hon. Members took the example of my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Newham, South of using a bicycle to travel in London, they would undoubtedly be far healthier than they are now, although the atmosphere in London is probably as poisonous as a packet of 20 fags smoked one after another. The thought of my hon. Friend cycling down the Highway towards Newham on his bike with a spliff in his mouth would engender a great deal of amusement in some people. One knows, of course, that it is not the type of thing that he would do.

Mr. Spearing: It is a relaxant.

Mr. Banks: As a relaxant or otherwise. If my hon. Friend wants a spliff, I will no doubt be able to supply him with one, but it will not be one that I have rolled myself.

The White Paper begins to scratch the surface of a problem, but unless the Government are prepared to acknowledge that the problem is far more deep-seated and wide-ranging in our society, the idea that we can wage a successful war on drugs in this country is a load of bunkum.

12.50 pm

Mr. John Greenway (Ryedale): I want to deal with two issues in what I hope, for the sake of other colleagues who wish to speak, will not be an over-long speech.

First, I wish to speak briefly about what is happening in my constituency, which, as the House knows, is very rural and distinctly different from that of the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott). However, I have witnessed what she described in her part of north-east London and in the United States of America, and I thought that she described the problem extremely accurately.

In Ryedale, about 15 or 18 months ago, there was growing evidence of the availability of drugs. As a consequence, I called a meeting of all interested agencies, to try to get to grips with what was happening and what was being done about drug abuse in that part of rural north Yorkshire.

Two things emerged from our deliberations. First, the drug education programme in schools was being dramatically curtailed as a result of a cut in funding. Secondly, although the police and other agencies—the national health service and social services—generally felt that they had a grip on the problem as far as they were able to detect it, no agency existed to reach the youngsters who had fallen through the safety net.

I want to make two points that are directly relevant to the White Paper. First, on education, some anxiety has been expressed that even the extra funding announced in the White Paper is not enough. I would simply make one judgment about whether it is enough. I would like us to restore the drug education programme in schools, run by the county councils, to its position of 18 months ago. If the funding that has been made available is insufficient, we need more. That is the test: whether it is £190 or £200 and so many pounds per school is not the issue. We had three health education officers in north Yorkshire; we now have one. I would like the other two, whom we lost, to be replaced.

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr. Eric Forth): I have struggled with this problem in my three years in the Department for Education. My hon. Friend may know—I am sure that his local education authority told him—that the original funding of health education advisers was of a pump-priming nature, designed to establish their usefulness and so on. The programme was extended, but eventually we decided that it should be up to local education authorities to decide whether they could justify continuing the funding. Many have; some have not. We regarded it as being not right or feasible to continue funding from the centre something that was only ever intended to be a pump-priming exercise.

Mr. Greenway: I hear what my hon. Friend says. He will be aware of the funding problems in north Yorkshire schools generally and the difficult decisions that have had to be taken. I simply make the point that the White Paper promises more money for drugs education programmes and I am trying to establish a yardstick against which we can establish whether that funding is adequate. A number of hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have said that it is not enough. I should like the three local health education officers who were employed previously

[Mr. Greenway]

to be reinstated. That was the overwhelming view of all the public and voluntary sector agencies that attended the meetings that I called to address the problem.

As to the difficulty of youngsters falling through the safety net, in central Ryedale we have set up a detached youth work project such as exists in many parts of the country, including York and Scarborough. I pay tribute to north Yorkshire health authority, which has made funds available to enable the project to employ a detached youth worker.

We must address one very important issue that the White Paper does not make entirely clear. We are discussing the establishment of a county-wide drug action team with some form of executive control over drug strategies. I welcome that move. We are also talking about establishing a drug reference group, although one clearly is not enough in a county the size of north Yorkshire. I welcome the fact that the White Paper tries to be as flexible as possible in delivering support, but I should like us to embrace various schemes, such as the detached youth work project, using a combination of existing funds and those that the White Paper makes available.

In involving the police, probation service and criminal justice agencies in that work, we must ensure that there is a clear difference between a drugs-line approach and a helpline approach. If youngsters who are taking drugs and who need help, advice and support think that if they dial a telephone number the police will become involved, they will not use that service. As an ex-policeman, I feel very strongly about that. We must continue to hit drug users hard, particularly those who are extremely affluent, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wimbledon (Dr. Goodson-Wickes) said. I am in favour of the police giving a caution for a first offence, but I think that drug users should expect to be prosecuted for any subsequent offences.

We must ensure that the White Paper's initiatives strengthen the assistance that is provided for young drug users who need support but who have fallen through the safety net. Therefore, we must consider carefully how the new drug reference groups and the drug action teams will work and who will be involved in their work.

The strategy document contains a general programme to combat drug trafficking. That issue has been at the forefront of our work in the Home Affairs Select Committee for the eight years during which I have been a member of that Committee. In 1989 we published two reports on the subject and in July we hope to publish another report on organised crime that will contain a significant section about the problems of drug trafficking.

I am sorry that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was not in his place when my colleague on the Committee, the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson), made her quite excellent speech. She reflected on what we witnessed only two weeks ago when we visited Holland. As many hon. Members know, the Dutch authorities have now decided to decriminalise the use of soft drugs. The hon. Lady referred to 100 coffee shop premises in Amsterdam, but there are in fact 1,500 throughout Holland. Superficially, these coffee shops have an attraction. People can go there to buy a joint of cannabis, and they are not doing causing anyone any trouble. It all appears to be quite attractive but when one looks behind that, one sees the danger.

The Dutch authorities—the police or the Government—did not know what on earth to do about who supplied cannabis to the coffee shops. They have not legalised or controlled the supply of the drug and they have not done enough to attack the organised crime gangs involved in supplying drugs. A consequence has been a horrific increase in the involvement of organised crime in the supply of cannabis to coffee shops.

One can say that such shops have not led cannabis users on to hard drugs, but it is no wonder that people are not allowed to stand in the street outside coffee shops trying to sell hard drugs to the cannabis and marijuana users who have just been inside. The organised criminals would not like that at all.

The drug liaison officer in The Hague—I pay tribute to his work—told us in no uncertain terms that all the evidence that has now been collated shows that criminals go from France to Belgium, where they steal a car or rob a bank. They then go to Holland, buy as much cannabis as they can get in the back of a car and go back to France. The fact that those are all Schengen countries with virtually no border controls means that the criminals can do what they like. Even the authorities in Italy have strongly criticised the Dutch approach and the problems that it is creating regarding the supply of not just cannabis but hard drugs across western Europe.

Another problem is money laundering. There are now more than 100 currency exchange shops in one part of Amsterdam which make far more money from the laundering of currency than from tourists. That is quite staggering. Our police say that currency exchange shops in London are centres where sterling is exchanged for Dutch guilders by people who go to Amsterdam to buy more cannabis, which is brought back to this country. At Schipol airport, anyone stopped in possession of—wait for it—anything under 25 kg of cannabis is not arrested. They have their name and address taken, and they are let go because the authorities simply cannot cope with the enormity of the problem.

I say to the hon. Member for Newham, North-West that I have tried to keep an open mind on whether any kind of drug should be decriminalised, but all the experience convinces me that, while there is a superficial attraction, it is not the answer. The Dutch have now realised that, and are hitting hard at the organised crime gangs involved in the supply of cannabis.

Time is short, and there is much more that I could have said—particularly about what we do in Britain. We must strengthen the National Criminal Intelligence Service, and I imagine that the Select Committee will have a lot to say about that when we report to the House. If there is one thing that I have learned in the eight years in which we on the Home Affairs Select Committee have looked at the horrid and tragic problem of drug trafficking and abuse, it is that we must not drop our guard on any one strand of the battle.

There has been a tendency in the past to concentrate on whatever approach has been in vogue—one year prevention, another year demand reduction, another year a crackdown on traffickers, another, an attempt to deal with the coca growers in South America. I maintain that it is not inevitable that we will lose the war against drugs; but we shall not win it unless and until we attack every strand of the strategy with the utmost vigour for many years to come. In a way, the White Paper recognises that. Annexe B sets out a five-pronged approach. I greatly

welcome the interdepartmental approach which is to be adopted, and I urge the Minister vigorously to pursue all five strands at the same time. Until we do that, we shall never be sure that everything that we should be doing to stop the spread of this dreadful drug misuse has been done.

1.5 pm

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): I listened with great interest to the speech by the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway). I want to echo a number of his comments, particularly those about the need for consistent core funding for some of the drug work which has been established in recent years but which has now been either shut down or threatened with closure because the core funding to allow it to continue is not available.

The White Paper confirms for us an alarming picture of the scale of drug misuse in the United Kingdom. We have been reminded of some of the statistics in the debate already today. The Lord President reminded us that 3 million people will take an illegal drug this year; and that the number of notified addicts increased by 13 per cent. in the year to 1993, the last for which figures are available. In 1992 there were 1,200 drug-related deaths in England and Wales, an increase of 11 per cent. on the previous year. No doubt the figure increased again since then.

Recent research carried out at Exeter university showed that nearly half of 15 to 16-year-olds have been offered an illegal drug, and nearly half of the boys in that survey had used either cannabis or ecstasy.

There is among some young people a culture that accepts drug use as a leisure activity that is part of growing up. We might speculate about why that is so, but it undoubtedly is; and it is accompanied, where it prevails, by a sharp upward trend in school truancy problems, with low achievement at school and an increasing incidence of serious health problems. And we know, as we have been reminded today, that there is a strong correlation between rising drug misuse and crime.

I agree that there is much to be welcomed in the White Paper. It represents a move in the right direction away from a purely punitive approach, recognising realities, and it represents a serious attempt also to achieve a coherent national approach to the problem, using the £500 million or so in resources in a co-ordinated way, in place of the piecemeal approach of the past.

The document, however, also leaves a number of serious questions unanswered. It appears to try to face both ways on some of the issues. For instance, the White Paper seems to want to encourage frank discussion of drug problems in schools, and wants to help young people to develop "the skills and attitudes" to resist drug misuse, encouraging discussion between pupils and teachers to enable them to do just that; but it also suggests that the police be called in whenever there is evidence of drug use. That clearly makes it impossible for frank discussion of drugs to be undertaken with teachers in classrooms—I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) about that.

Mr. Forth: If I get the chance later, I may try to develop this point; but in case I do not, I should point out that a distinction must be made between the routine dissemination of information on drugs to pupils of all ages, within the curriculum and helped by the guidance that we are giving teachers, and what should be done in schools to deal with incidents of drug taking, supply, use or misuse. That is an important distinction. I understand the hon. Gentleman's point and I am aware of the concern about it, but I believe that it will be possible as a matter of routine for teachers to conduct drugs education in schools on the one hand and on the other for heads and teachers to deal with the difficult problem of individual cases of drug taking among pupils, about which we also give guidance in the circular.

Mr. Timms: The problem is that that distinction will not be apparent to pupils. They will want to understand whether they are dealing with people who are there to provide advice or with people who are there to report them to the police. Teachers will have real difficulties in taking the strategy forward and understanding what they are supposed to be doing. I would like a clearer focus on the need, especially in schools, for help, initially, for drug users rather than punishment.

I shall focus my brief contribution to the debate on the lessons that can be learned from the experience of the Newham drugs advice project already mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West. It is a remarkable project and its achievements and experience throw a good deal of light on the debate.

I know that the Lord President has been briefed about the project and has said that he will visit it and that the Home Office has for some time been evaluating its work. One of the reasons why it is remarkable is that it has always had to be run on a shoestring. It was established in 1987, but has never had secure funding. Inevitably, much of the energy of those who work there has been taken up by fund raising. Colin Cripps, who leads the project and was one of its founders in 1987, estimates that he spends five months of the year filling in forms to make funding bids for the following year.

This year, the project has had continued support from the local education authority and, for the first time, significant support from the district health authority. Beyond that, it raises funds from whatever sources it can, such as Comic Relief and Stratford city challenge. Those are all one-off grants and the project will have to apply for them again next year if it is to continue its current level of activity. It is a hand-to-mouth existence in which it is impossible to plan ahead. The project staff cannot even be confident that they will have jobs in a year's time, let alone plan the strategy that we need.

Despite that, the project has remarkable achievements to its credit, especially what it calls the youth awareness programme or YAP. The programme has its roots in imaginative and detailed research, which was carried out with the help of students and others, using a variety of techniques, into the thinking of young people on drug issues.

The research shows—and I believe that this is a significant finding—that the source from which young people derive most information about drugs is other young people. They have friends with detailed first-hand knowledge of drug use. What their friends say to them about the subject is credible and compelling whereas, inevitably, what teachers or local Rotarians say is second hand and limited in its apparent relevance to young people.

The project responded to that research by training a large and growing group of volunteer drug workers, as my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West

[Mr. Timms]

mentioned earlier. Those workers are themselves young people. There are now 72 of them in Newham willing to tell school pupils about the dangers of drug abuse and how drug users can obtain help. The volunteers go through a rigorous 30-week programme, which entails two days' training per week—a big commitment on their part—to prepare them for voluntary work.

The standing conference on drug abuse is developing national vocational qualifications for training for such work. The Newham project hopes before long to be able to offer accreditation to those who go through the training programme. Some of the trained volunteers have in the past been drug misusers and many are unemployed. They are able to explain the dangers and problems of drug abuse to other young people in a way that teachers cannot. The value of that approach was mentioned by the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone). He pointed out the value of having young people, a number of them past abusers, telling their peers what the problems are and how they can obtain help.

The project has been remarkably successful in providing a route to help youngsters with problems. It is helping them to come through their drug problems to a future far better than would be the case if they were trapped for ever in drug abuse. Since the programme began, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of school pupils coming forward for one-to-one advice from the project and to talk about their drug problems. However, the key to the programme is the realisation that it is young people themselves who are in the best position to help other young people to tackle their drug problems.

The success of the programme is now being taken up elsewhere and I very much welcome that. The Newham project is also exploring ways in which to use the youth sub-culture to make young people aware of the dangers of drugs, by being present at raves and providing information to the young people attending them and by writing contributions for the magazines that circulate among young people. It is now taking part in the preparation of a CD-ROM package. The approach taken is non-moralistic but effective in explaining the dangers of drug abuse and in letting young people with drug problems know how they can obtain help.

The most striking feature of the Newham approach is that it can be shown to have worked, and the experience of that success raises three questions about the approach set out in the White Paper. First, projects such as the Newham project need to have secure core funding. That was well illustrated by the exchange between the hon. Member for Ryedale and the Minister a few moments ago. Almost all the funding sources that the project will aim to tap want to be associated with innovation and with creating something new, for which they can share the credit. It is understandable that that is what they want. The Newham project has been highly innovative and has attracted funds as a result, but it has succeeded and having demonstrated success, it now needs to be able to implement what it has developed in a consistent way.

The funding pressures compel projects to spend their time dreaming up novelties instead of applying the results of the innovative work that they have carried out in the past. The pressure from the funding regime is all towards gimmickry. We need the consistent application of good practice, but there is nothing in the White Paper to encourage me to believe that projects such as the Newham project will have a more secure existence in the next three years than they have had in the past three. This year's innovation needs to be turned into next year's routine and we need a funding regime that allows that to happen.

Secondly, there must be some scepticism about the effectiveness of conventional school-based drug education. It is encouraging that the White Paper recognises that young people make their own decisions about whether to abuse drugs, but it is doubtful that the White Paper view that formal classroom teaching and discussion are the best way in which to influence those decisions is correct. We shall need to develop and pay for more imaginative approaches than that, especially when schoolteachers will conclude from the White Paper that their overriding responsibility is to report cases of drug abuse to the police.

Thirdly, I question whether the establishment of top-heavy drug action teams, as described in the White Paper, is the best way in which to tackle a problem that is increasingly pervasive among the young. The White Paper emphasises the importance of bringing together the most senior officials from the local and health authorities, the police, the prisons and the probation service. Of course, we need to promote effective partnerships among the different agencies, but the most effective partnerships that I have seen do not simply bring together all the top officials. They have built into them input from the ground, where imaginative ideas and a real understanding of what is happening can be obtained. That seems especially important when we are talking about a problem that is most prevalent among young people. Whatever may be the strengths of local authority chief executives and chief constables, closeness to youth is not one of them.

The proposal for there to be one co-opted voluntary sector representative is inadequate and the establishment of somewhat cumbersome drug reference teams alongside the drug action teams does not seem to fit the bill. We need to build new and dynamic partnerships, which bring together at the appropriate level locally the agencies identified in the White Paper and those who work on the ground and who know the young people and their problems. It seems wrong that the £5.9 million for establishing the forums is much more than the extra money promised for work in schools.

There is a great deal at stake in tackling the drug problem. We must be imaginative and put into practice what we have learnt from projects throughout the country over the past decade. The White Paper represents a move in the right direction, but we need to go a good deal further before we can be confident about the future.

1.19 pm

Mr. David Faber (Westbury): As so often on these occasions, we find ourselves pushed for time. I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to my hon. Friend the Minister and to the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), because I shall have to leave the Chamber before the Front-Bench replies. I have a surgery in my constituency, which has long been advertised in the local press.

I have been involved in the battle against drug and alcohol abuse, in one form or another, throughout my adult life. I am proud to be a trustee of two charities—Clouds house, one of the foremost drug treatment and

rehabilitation centres in the country, which is based in my constituency, and the Addictive Diseases Trust, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), which is doing pioneering work at Downview prison in Sutton. I shall say a little more about the work of the trust later in my remarks.

I, too, welcome the White Paper, and I warmly congratulate my right hon. Friend the Lord President on being the driving force behind it. We have heard about the three basic strands that are to be found in the White Paper. They include a continuing commitment to the legal deterrent and law enforcement, about which much has been said already. That has been dealt with effectively.

I add my support to all that has been said, especially by the Front-Bench spokesmen and my hon. Friends on the legalisation of any drugs, whether hard or soft. The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) had it absolutely right when he said that it is a distraction to talk about legalisation and that it is damaging to raise the subject. Those who seek the legalisation of cannabis misunderstand the basic principle of a chemical dependency, which underlines all addiction whether it is to drugs or alcohol. The argument is not confined to whether cannabis may be less physically damaging than alcohol or hard drugs. Anyone who knows people who have been addicted to cannabis for a long time will know the apathy, the torpor and the generally debilitating effect that the drug has.

There have been many references to law and order and much has been said about Holland. Spain is a country that I know well. It decriminalised possession of cannabis over 10 years ago. It witnessed an immediate soaring crime rate and ever since there have been efforts to try to reverse the decision. Decriminalisation sends the wrong signals to our young people.

The second strand to be found in the White Paper is the need to reduce the availability and acceptability of drugs, especially to young people. As we have heard time and again, our young people are at particular risk. We have heard the figures and I do not need again to read them into the record.

We have heard, too, that drug misuse is not confined to the inner cities. It is to be found in rural areas such as the one that I represent. No school and no community is immune from the problem. I welcome the emphasis in the White Paper on a national co-ordinated strategy, which will be implemented at a local community level in partnership with the many statutory and voluntary agencies that are involved. One such local partnership is already well under way—it has been for about a year now—in my constituency. Secondary heads from schools throughout west and north Wiltshire have got together in partnership with the local newspaper, the *Wiltshire Times*, to launch an extremely welcome initiative called Drugs Wise.

As the *Wiltshire Times* recently acknowledged, drugs are freely available to children in our community and it will take a community approach to fight the problem. From that initial standpoint, the schools have undertaken a thorough assessment of the support and counselling services that are available in their catchment areas. The results were predictable—an all-too-sorry lack of places for young people, including school pupils, to go to for help. The result was a successful local initiative, which was begun by a local general practitioner in Warminster in conjunction with the local secondary school, Kingdown, to set up a drop-in centre for pupils who genuinely needed counselling or who wanted to talk about the problems that might face them. That is a model that we are looking to reproduce throughout the area in the other towns.

A questionnaire was sent to all 14 to 18-year-olds throughout north and west Wiltshire to ascertain how much they already knew about drugs and alcohol and about the services on offer to them. About 50 per cent.—a terrifyingly high percentage—said that they felt that they knew very little and that they needed a great deal more drug education. The results came as a shock to local teachers and parents. They rightly forced some schools to reappraise the way in which they dealt with their drugs policy.

I particularly welcome my hon. Friend the Minister's initiative, the Department for Education's campaign, Drug Proof, which I know will be of great help to schools in seeking to advise parents on just where they stand.

One of our local campaign's major achievements is that schools and parents are now openly discussing the drugs problems in their communities, and many parents have come to appreciate the very real problems that drugs pose for them in rural areas and for those who live in the inner cities. I hope that adequate funding will be made available to the specific small community groups, which can do so much good work in our community.

I pay tribute to the work that is done at Clouds house, in my constituency at East Knoyle. It is one of the foremost drug treatment centres in the country and has been going for some 12 years now. I pay warm tribute to the director, Nick Barton, who is also chairman of the European Association for the Treatment of Addiction. Clouds house has a long and successful history. The treatment is based on the Minnesota model, now widely acknowledged as perhaps the most successful model for the treatment of addiction, when measured in terms of the outcomes from the treatment centre. That model is supported widely throughout the country when it comes to rehabilitation, by Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, about whose work we have heard very little this morning, but to which great tribute should be paid for the work that they do throughout the country.

I warmly welcome the recognition in the White Paper that there should be a range of options to meet the different needs of drug addicts at different times, but that the principal objective remains

"to assist drug misusers to achieve and maintain a drug free state"—

and that

"abstinence remains the ultimate aim."

That should certainly be the ultimate aim of us all.

I mentioned at the beginning of my speech the Addictive Diseases Trust, of which I am a trustee and which is currently operating at Downview prison in Sutton and has been for about the past three years. As we have heard today, drug abuse in prisons is at best widespread and at worst rampant. It is very much in the nature of addiction that people can change their chosen drug only too easily. In that way, an alcoholic can become a drug addict or vice versa. In the secure environment of prison, drugs are more easily distributed than alcohol, so of course it is only natural that drugs have become the main problem.

We estimate that some 40 per cent. to 50 per cent. of prisoners in our gaols—as many as 80 per cent. in some prisons—are using drugs. Many have a chronic or severe

[Mr. David Faber]

addiction, but worst of all, many inmates are not addicts when they go in but are when they are released. Many more have graduated from soft to hard drugs in prison by the time they are released.

The social consequences for the community are dire. On release, an addict will need about £500 or £600—possibly as much as £1,000—a week to fund his or her habit. Such people will probably have no job, so they will need to steal roughly the equivalent of £1,500 or £2,000-worth of goods to achieve the sum that they need to fund their drug habit. Statistics now show that house burglary and theft from cars are the most common offences by addicts, and nearly half of all property crime is drug related.

The average cost of keeping someone in prison is roughly £23,000 a year. The average sentence at Downview prison, where the trust works, is four years. Including police and court costs, a Downview inmate is therefore costing the taxpayer some £100,000. Yet on release there is every chance of a prisoner reoffending because of his or her addiction. The vicious circle of offending, prison and reoffending must be broken, and treatment in prison must be the most cost-effective way of doing it.

The Addictive Diseases Trust runs one of the first specialised full-time dedicated addiction treatment programmes within the English prison system. The model is adapted from a very successful one that has been used in the United States for the past 14 years. I am happy to say that, after three years of charitable funding, it has now been taken over by the Prison Service. The unit is run by a small dedicated team in the prison itself and by its support staff. It includes qualified addiction counsellors, trainee counsellors and therapists. Most important of all, it has a number of peer counsellors, inmates, including at Downview, one prisoner who is serving a life sentence for murder, who has gone through the programme, has had intensive training and is now a peer counsellor to his fellow inmates.

I quote the words of Lord Justice Woolf, the author of the report on prison reform, who said:

"Although the pressures on prisons at the present time are intense, there are still beacons of excellence throughout the system and the ADT is one of the brightest of those beacons. I only hope that the work that it has started will spread throughout the service."

The programme is full time, intensive and rigorous. It involves group therapy, one-to-one counselling, lectures and daily written work. Above all, it is not a soft option for inmates. It has many other supporters and endorsements that have been placed on the record. John Harding, the chief probation officer of inner London, his honour Judge Tumim, chief inspector of prisons, and many others have visited the prison. Most important, they have witnessed the fact that the unit has credibility with inmates, because of the involvement of the peer counsellors. It is a remarkable achievement that more than 90 per cent. of prisoners have signed a contract agreeing to random urine testing and that, within the next few weeks, that figure will be 100 per cent. Downview prison can therefore justifiably claim to be the first drugs-free prison in the country.

In the context of earlier discussions on educating the young, one final bonus is that a programme exists whereby inmates go to local schools and tell children, not just about the horrors of drugs, which often does not deter young people, but about the horrors of being in prison, of their addiction there, of the sort of life that they lead, and of how horrific it is for them. I warmly commend their work. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister hopes to visit the prison soon. I hope that that model can be extended elsewhere.

I personally know only too well the scourge of drug abuse in our society, and the havoc and misery that it causes to families, people's jobs and their health. I also know personally only too well the ultimate grief and loss that drug abuse can bring. I urge the Government to redouble their efforts. I congratulate them on the White Paper and I hope that they will see through everything that they promise in it.

1.30 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): I tender my apologies to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and to both Front-Bench Members. In common with the hon. Member for Westbury (Mr. Faber), due to a previous engagement I shall not be present for the winding-up speeches, although I hasten to add that my engagement is not to attend the hon. Gentleman's well-advertised advice service.

In a sense, the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), who regrettably is no longer in her place, was the speech that I had intended to make. Both graphically and accurately, she described the realities of drug abuse in communities in an inner-London suburb such as mine. Every incident that she related has been replicated on my estates.

The tragedies of drug abuse involve not only its effect on the life of the individual user and his or her family, but the way in which the incidence of drug abuse and the targeting of certain areas by drug pushers affects the lives of whole communities. Parents are afraid to allow their children out to play on their estates because, as my hon. Friend said, used hypodermic needles are being found in sandpits and they fear the aggressive way in which many drug pushers attempt to sell their products.

My hon. Friend most graphically made the point that the police resources to counter the activities of drug pushers seem to be markedly lacking. To give a precise example, one of my estates was built towards the end of the 1960s, when open-plan architecture was the vogue. It is not unusual for it to be flooded during the summer months by drug pushers and their assistants. The assistants stand on every corner around that estate with a mobile telephone in their hand. When a resident on the estate telephones the police to inform them that drug selling is going on, which my constituents are very much against on their estates, those young men with mobile telephones warn the drug pusher of the police's approach before they are even within eye contact of where the actual commercial exchange is taking place. They disappear from sight. No charges can be brought. The police are overstretched and undermanned, certainly in my constituency. They respond to another call and the commercial exchanges go on as before.

I was somewhat surprised when the statement on the White Paper was given to the House a few weeks ago. I and all hon. Members welcome the Government's policy that there must be a multi-department approach to tackling

drugs in our nation. Representatives of the Home Office, the Department of Health, and the Department for Education were present on the Front Bench on that occasion, but there was no one from the Department of Employment, the Department of Social Security or the Department of the Environment. Those Departments have responsibilities for areas of our national life which impact directly on the lives of many young people who turn to drug use or drug selling, and who do so not least because they can find no job or interesting training scheme to join. Certain 16 and 17-year-olds who are also excluded from making any claim on the social security benefit system inevitably turn to prostitution and drugs simply to make a living.

Homelessness in central London is an ever-increasing problem. There is a direct link between it and drug abuse. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington said, although not every homeless or unemployed person will automatically turn to drug use, there is an undoubted link between having no home and using drugs. I urge the Government to broaden their multi-departmental approach to include those other three Departments, which have a vital input to the social fabric of our country.

It is important to consider how to approach the educational and health education aspects of the Government's programme. In common with other hon. Members, I have visited schools and spoken to young people about drugs. The bulk of the knowledge about how drugs are obtained and their effects seems to rest exclusively with the scholars in schools while the teachers are deemed to know absolutely nothing. When I have spoken to young people about the drug education programmes that they have attended at their schools, they often tell me that the programmes are risible. On many occasions they say that they should be standing where the teacher is standing and vice versa because they know a great deal more about drugs than their teachers will ever know.

The dangers of drug misuse are presented as part of the strategy to tackle drugs. In many instances, young people have no present life worth talking about, so to threaten them with the possibility of an appalling future is irrelevant. The present is so appalling for many of them that they cannot conceive, by the widest stretch of the imagination, any future. They welcome the fact that drug use is a means of escaping the reality of life. Prevention should be central to any campaign against drugs, so telling a young person not to take drugs now because he or she may die or some terrible disease in the future is the wrong approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) made a key argument about the core funding. Whatever the scheme, and however it is implemented, that funding does not even begin to scratch the surface of the problem. We must acknowledge that preventing drug use—and in some cases prosecuting, if that is the right plan—is a long-term process. It is important that adequate long-term funding is provided for the dedicated people who work incredibly long hours, often in appalling circumstances, to help those with drug problems. I know of one drug initiative which is manned by three people who have suffered not only threats of physical violence but actual violence. They go back, day after day, because they are committed to lifting the burden of drug abuse from young people and their communities. Such initiatives must be funded adequately and staffed with sufficient numbers of people to make them work successfully.

Such initiatives are attempting to deal with youngsters such as the 13-year-old boy, who lives just outside my constituency, who can earn anything up to £1,500 a week acting as a runner for drug pushers. That child is supporting his whole family. He is not, as it happens, a drug user himself. What does our society, his local community or any drug initiative team have to offer that child? The answer, I am afraid, is absolutely nothing.

1.39 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Croydon, South): Against the background of increasing drug trafficking in Croydon, I and all those involved in combating drugs in the Croydon area would like to take this opportunity to welcome the White Paper. As the Prime Minister said, it is

"the most far-reaching action plan yet against drugs."

We are all aware of the appalling impact that drug abuse has on our society. The problems associated with drug misuse affect every community in the United Kingdom.

A decade ago, when we talked about the problems created by the use of drugs, we spoke about adults and teenagers. We are now increasingly talking of children—some, as I mentioned in my intervention on my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council, as young as six years old, to whom knowledge and sometimes use of soft drugs has become a reality of life. I quoted from the minutes of the Croydon regional drug and alcohol unit of 1 June, which said:

"It is known that children as young as 6 or 7 may be using cannabis and pills."

At such a young age, children almost always associate taking drugs with having a good time, looking grown-up and making them more acceptable to their peer group. The reality, of course, is very different. Young children have died from their first experiment with solvents, choked to death on their own vomit and jumped from multi-story car parks under the delusion that they could fly.

The problem is not confined to inner cities. The hon. Members for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) and for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) spoke about their inner-city experiences, but outer cities, such as Croydon, have a drug culture, too, which is mainly based around cannabis or the new skunk, based on cannabis but seven times the strength.

Why do young people experiment with drugs? Some seek to place the blame for increased drug abuse on unemployment, poverty or lack of self-worth, but that does not explain why some people never try drugs. Some then try to abandon the practice, but some go on to develop a problem.

The Select Committee on Scottish Affairs took evidence which counteracted claims that the socio-economic environment is to blame. Its survey showed that peer group pressure would seem to be the single most important contributory factor in abuse, with another being the thrill of taking part in an activity which, although disapproved of by parents and society in general, is often glamorised by film and television. The media must take some responsibility for the way in which such issues are portrayed.

[Mr. Richard Ottaway]

Unfortunately, merely telling young people about the dangers of taking drugs has no effect. Indeed, perhaps through arousing curiosity, it may encourage experimentation. The shock warning tactics employed in the past have proved to be of little value, as children know or think that they know more than the lecturer. Young people have the arrogance of youth that—perhaps—we all enjoyed. They make a clear distinction between soft and hard drugs. Using so-called soft drugs, such as cannabis, LSD, ecstasy and poppers is often seen as safe. They say, "I won't become addicted." Interestingly enough, they reserve contempt for those who succumb to hard drugs such as cocaine, crack and heroin. Unfortunately, many young people who claim to be able to handle soft drugs end up as addicts.

The delusion that some drugs are safe can only be reinforced by those who, ignoring the evidence that greater accessibility increases the use of drugs, have called for cannabis to be legalised. Those who favour such action argue that taking cannabis is a relatively harmless recreational activity which has little impact on the rest of society. But is it really harmless? Evidence is mounting that cannabis misuse can lead to mental illness, liver damage, lung complaints and reduced immunity. Additionally, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Mr. Spring) pointed out, research has revealed that cannabis interferes with male and female hormone levels and with fertility and gestation in women. A high proportion of those unfortunate enough to have throat cancer also admit to experimenting with the drug. That is quite a list of side effects for a drug that some people want to be more readily available. People who argue for relaxation say that legalisation would result in reduced prices, so drug-related crime would drop. One has only to look abroad to know that that is fantasy. Any country which goes down that road will leave itself open to drug traffickers hoping to target countries with weak controls. They would move in to meet demand for other, more dangerous drugs, so exacerbating existing problems as well as providing a useful, stop-and-shop for users from neighbouring countries. The 1961 United Nations Simla convention recognised that risk and required parties to adopt measures to prevent the misuse of controlled drugs, including cannabis.

I wonder whether the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and the Liberal Democrats have thought through their arguments. I sometimes think that the hon. Member for Newham, North-West is not old Labour or new Labour but Liberal Labour. He spoke of legalisation. Did he mean through licensed trade? Would previously illegal drugs be sold through outlets? Unfortunately the hon. Gentleman is not present. Would there be age limits? I understand that the aim of people who want to legalise cannabis is to destroy the market for pushers and dealers, but if there were an age limit of 18 the illegality would be among users below that age. Traffickers would target the very youngsters whom we are trying to protect.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I agree with the hon. Gentleman that there are strong arguments for not decriminalising cannabis—the policy of the official Opposition—but perhaps the hon. Gentleman will comment on the book "Satan's Children" by the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan), which argues for the legalisation not only of cannabis but of all dangerous drugs.

Mr. Ottaway: My hon. Friend's book is actually entitled "Saturn's Children". He is a bright and intelligent Member of Parliament, full of imaginative ideas, and his book contains many good concepts. However, I do not agree with him on the matter that the hon. Lady mentioned. Legalisation of drugs would result in increased use. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West could not answer that point when I raised it in an intervention. Legalisation would result in carnage among young children.

The Police Federation is against legalisation and is convinced that stricter sentencing of drug traffickers and dealers is needed. The police remain convinced that a multi-agency approach embracing greater international co-operation in reducing illegal drug supply, together with enhanced education, is the only means of reducing the danger. The way forward lies not in improving access to drugs but in increased availability of information for children, parents and people in authority who have the opportunity to recognise symptoms at an early stage.

I welcome the White Paper, which rightly concentrates on enforcement and, more importantly, education. That reflects on my hon. Friend the Minister of State, who has responsibility for school policy and is present to respond to the debate. I hope that he noted my remarks about drug use among six-year-olds in the Croydon area, in the context of primary schools.

The Croydon police will be up and running in terms of the White Paper by September. Such projects will play an increasingly important role in the fight against drugs. Much excellent work is done by agencies and individuals in programmes to persuade young people not to resort to drugs, reduce the acceptability of involvement in drugs and teach the skills necessary to say no. All mediums are being used to get this message across—from theatre groups and drug prevention buses to workshops and parent information leaflets.

In preparation for the White Paper, the Government have recognised that they cannot win the battle alone. The new central drugs co-ordination unit will enable a more focused and coherent approach, bringing in schools, the police, voluntary agencies and, most importantly, young people themselves. They will be working together to maximise efforts to deal with this awful problem, which still has too great an impact on our society today.

1.49 pm

Mrs. Llin Golding (Newcastle-under-Lyme): I, too, welcome this debate on the White Paper "Tackling Drugs Together". With drug addicts growing in number by about 30 per cent. a year and drug-related crime by 11 per cent. a year, there has been an urgent need for co-ordinated Government action and it is more than time that this strategy was introduced. For many years, my constituents have been calling for action to stop the spiralling rate of crime, which they realise is related to drugs and they welcome the White Paper as I do.

The proposals to put money and effort into preventing and discouraging our young people from experimenting with drugs by telling them of the dangers and warning them of the consequences have been more than welcome. My children have been telling me for years that they and

their friends have found drugs to be all too easily available. They were telling me 10 to 15 years ago that they could come by them inside or outside school. If we had only had the White Paper then, we might not be having this debate today.

Many young people will tell of the availability of drugs, but few can tell of contacts which can be made to help them to solve their drug problems. The hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), as chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on drug misuse, has done sterling work in the House and has been one of the many advocates of the action to be taken. I am secretary of that group and if I could have worked as hard as the hon. Gentleman, we might have done something before now. I must also pay tribute to all the organisations that have tackled the issues. They have struggled hard to make their voices heard and many have gone under through lack of funds. I must add my voice to the plea for long-term guaranteed funding for those groups, which do so much good work and have so much knowledge in this area.

It is surely well known that many drug addicts sell drugs to feed their own habits and thus create new users. In curing we can prevent, and we should put more effort into it.

The task force to be set up under the White Paper has to identify any gaps in the provision of drugs services. The Minister must already be aware that there is an enormous gap between the amount of money spent on enforcement and control—some £346 million in 1993-94—and the £61 million spent on treatment. Much more could be done about treatment for drug addicts.

I must also make a plea for solvent abuse to be included in the Government's strategy. A recent report by the Professional Association of Teachers cited solvent abuse as of much greater concern to its members than hard drugs. Here I must pay tribute to RE-SOLV, which has done much work in this area and has brought to our attention the real problems faced by solvent abusers.

Drug abuse in prisons is another problem. Many people and many hon. Members find it hard to understand, but the Addictive Diseases Trust says that in some prisons up to 80 per cent. of prisoners are using drugs. If we cannot control drugs in our prisons, where can we control them?

Many homeless people have drug problems. Can the Minister tell us what plans there are to get them off the streets and to give them the treatment that they need? That brings me back to the causes of drug use. Surely there must be a link between homelessness, unemployment and drug use? The standing conference on drug abuse has produced some frightening figures: according to a survey conducted in 1992, 39 per cent. of people using drugs in public places are homeless; 10 per cent. of single homeless people in Sheffield had a history of drug misuse, according to the census report by the *British Medical Journal* in 1991; and Department of Health drug misuse statistics for 1995 show that 80 per cent. of London drug users are unemployed. In 1992, the Cheshire youth service said that 76 per cent. of drug users in Cheshire were unemployed. According to a survey done by the university of Liverpool in 1989, in Wirral 82 per cent. of drug users were unemployed. We need to support and encourage training and employment for drug users or we shall never get them off the streets and into employment.

Much work needs to be done in all Government Departments, with all-party support. The paragraph that hit home very hard to me was paragraph 3.5 on page 16 of the White Paper, which was about cold drinks being available in clubs. Some drug pushers moved down the motorway rapidly, took over a club in my constituency, put in their heavyweights and turned off the cold water taps, leaving many of the young people in there dehydrated. Surely something more can be done about instant action to close clubs in which that happens while an investigation is made and perhaps plumbers are sent in, who might take as long as two weeks to arrive. That would cut the amount of money that those drug pushers make and that those clubs make when they do that to young people.

I agree that more powers should be given to local authorities to evict from council flats the people who cause misery and ruin the quality of life on many of our estates. They move in and take over control of a flat on an estate that was previously well run and well ordered, and suddenly the estate goes rapidly downhill. Something should be done and more powers should be given to local authorities to evict them.

The debate has been informed and constructive and I welcome the White Paper, although it has been a late start and is far from a solution to a difficult and complex problem. We must all act together to drive drug abuse from our society.

1.54 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Beckenham): I am grateful for the opportunity to get in a few words at the end of the debate.

I start by referring to a subject that I believe has not been mentioned—the link between drugs and acquired immune deficiency syndrome. That is a serious problem because the use of injecting drugs is the commonest and quickest way of transmitting AIDS. It is also the way in which, in western countries, especially in Britain, AIDS has been transmitted into the wider heterosexual population. In the cities of Europe, there is a direct correlation between high levels of HIV and AIDS infection and the high use of injecting drugs.

It has often been suggested that the way to solve that problem is purely to put into effect exchange needle schemes. Although that does have a part to play, I believe that the real answer to the problem lies in the encouragement of abstinence from drugs. I would therefore entirely endorse the theme of the White Paper and the opinion that has been expressed by the Opposition, which I am pleased to hear, in that regard.

I wish to make two or three more brief arguments. First, it is most important that the acceptability of drugs is not encouraged. In other words, it is of the essence to ensure that the message is given that all drugs are illegal, that they involve criminal offences, that the taking of drugs is morally wrong, that they must not be taken and that they cause harm. There must be no room for wavering or for confused signals.

I condemn people who try to encourage a debate about the potential for legalisation or, as they call it, "decriminalisation", because they do a grave disservice to the young, especially the vulnerable young, who may take that as a signal of weakness and acceptance.

We must take more action to prevent drug smuggling. Although that is only one part of supply, it is a very important part. The weakening of border checks sends very dangerous signals. I do not believe that proper border

[Mr. Piers Merchant]

checks affect our ability to be good Europeans and encourage free trade, any more than weights and measures enforcement affects free trade or the control of speeding affects travel. It is important to allocate more resources to monitoring imports to this country. There must be tighter controls and more routine checks in order to prevent illegal substances from crossing our borders.

The hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) spoke about the many inner-city problems connected with drugs. However, hon. Members should not think that middle class areas of outer London, such as my constituency of Beckenham, do not have severe problems also. Recent studies have shown that a high proportion of school children take drugs. There are regular drug-related arrests, and only two weeks ago a man was arrested in a supermarket car park. The back of his car was found to be filled with drugs worth millions of pounds. Those are the sorts of problems that communities face throughout the country.

2.2 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): This has been a very good debate and hon. Members are extremely grateful to the Lord President for providing the opportunity to debate this important subject today. He receives so many brickbats that it must be a rather unique experience to receive congratulations on finding time for this long overdue debate.

The House will probably not debate a more important issue than drug abuse. As the hon. Member for Beckenham (Mr. Merchant) pointed out, it does not respect people, places, social groups or classes. It is a great threat to our young people and to our society as a whole. The Labour party welcomes any attempt to deal with the growing problems of drug abuse. The addicts index reveals that there has been a 20 per cent. increase in drug abuse, and drugs ruin the lives of too many of our citizens.

Agencies working in this area, such as the excellent Drug Advisory Service Harringey—DASH—in my constituency of Hornsey and Wood Green, also welcome this perhaps rather belated acknowledgement of the drug problem and of their work in this area. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) referred to the fact that drug-related projects in our constituencies often operate on a shoestring. They need our commitment and our support.

One of the biggest challenges we face is how to get the drugs message across to young people. There is no easy solution to that problem. I think that it is extremely difficult for teachers to convey that message to young people. One of the most interesting aspects of today's debate was the discussion about how to impart that message. There is consensus—it has been a morning of consensus—that peer pressure must be brought to bear on young people to the effect that drug abuse is wrong and that drug taking is not glamorous but is deeply damaging. We must consider how to put that message across to young people.

In opening the debate for the Opposition, my hon. Friend the shadow Home Office Minister, the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth), talked about striking the right balance in communicating that message to young people. He referred to the anti-heroin campaign which, without criticising those involved, was perhaps not as successful as we had hoped. We must consider how to inform our young people about drugs without sending them the wrong message. In looking at the background to drug abuse, we ought to look at some of the social and economic problems. As Turning Point—the largest UK charity helping people with drink, drug and mental health problems—points out, more and more young people are deciding to take drugs because they cannot find any reason to hope in their own futures.

In many areas, a whole generation of young people have never worked and have become cynical as a result of broken promises on training, homelessness and low incomes. The cuts in youth services and the withdrawal of benefit from 16 and 17-year-olds must not be used as an excuse for drug taking, but they are part of the overall background to the difficulties that can arise when young people are tempted into taking drugs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) graphically illustrated some of the problems that that can cause. Research has shown that nearly 50 per cent. of 15 and 16-year-olds have been offered drugs. Two thirds of all thefts are drug related. The hon. Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway)—with whom I had the pleasure of serving on the Home Affairs Select Committee—rightly pointed to the connection between drugs and organised crime. The Select Committee is currently investigating that link, and at some stage will report its findings to the House. There is no doubt that organised crime plays a major part in the matter, and some good work has been done in the area by the National Criminal Intelligence Service. We must look at what other resources can be made available to the police.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) drew attention to the use of high technology by drug pushers, not all of whom are addicts. Some pushers have gone into the business, which harms the lives of others, for purely profit-making and cynical reasons. They are using modern techniques, and we must make sure that our police are adequately equipped to deal with that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East mentioned the shocking statistics which Exeter university discovered in 1993. Six per cent. of the 12 to 13 per cent. of students surveyed had used drugs. A Gallup survey for the YMCA in 1994 showed that only 18 per cent. of 16 to 21-year-olds knew where to get help for drug problems. The Government must deal with that issue, and that is why it is so important to have a multi-agency and interdepartmental approach.

In 1992, the British crime survey showed that the majority of 12 to 15-year-olds could not remember receiving any school lessons about drugs. Also, some 15 per cent. of children thought that taking an illegal drug once would not do them any harm. That is the group we must target. I hope that today's debate will be not the end but the start of our concern in this area.

The £5.9 million announced in the White Paper which will be available to schools in 1995-96 under the grants for education support and training programme works out at less than £250 a school. As in so many other areas of crime prevention, it is worth investing properly in education, prevention and treatment. California state

government research has shown that $1 invested in this way will save $7 to the taxpayer, largely through the reduced cost of crimes.

Will the Minister give an assurance that the money will be sustained? I shall be grateful if he also states whether it is new money. Colleagues on both sides of the House may recall the farce in recent years when new budgets for drug education co-ordinators were announced and were followed by drastic cuts which undermined their work. As the hon. Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), chairman of the all-party group on drug misuse, said at the time, the Government's mishandling of the situation reflects entirely inadequate thought in Government Departments and entirely inadequate co-ordination between those Departments. I hope that heed will be paid to what he said about the need for counselling in prisons and about education in schools. His work, together with that of my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding), on the all-party group is much appreciated by all hon. Members.

We also need to look carefully at how training in schools will be carried out. When the statement on the White Paper was made, my hon. Friend the Member for Dewsbury (Mrs. Taylor), shadow Leader of the House, asked what training would be given to the schools inspectorate to enable it to check that schools were delivering drug education as part of the national curriculum. The Lord President suggested that some Ofsted provision was under way, but I should like the Minister of State to go into more detail.

The Minister should also comment on the problem of truancy. The local government drugs forum in its consideration of the White Paper rightly pointed out that if young people are not in schools to receive drugs education and advice, all the targeting in the White Paper will go astray. Truancy is a considerable problem, and it is linked to crime, to drug misuse and to young people going off the rails.

Our hard-pressed teachers must be given the training and resources to develop this aspect of the curriculum properly. It is by no means easy for teachers to do this; sometimes the young people whom they are teaching know much more about drugs than they do.

The message that must go out from the House is that legalising drugs is not on. My hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson), in an excellent speech, put that message across graphically in the context of the Dutch experience. Furthermore, it is wrong to use arguments about the market to get across the message. I wish to use just one brief quotation from "Saturn's Children"—it ought to be entitled "Satan's Children"—to show what the hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) has to say about the problem:

"nor are drugs a particularly threatening health problem".

Of course they are: all drugs are. We must put that message across strongly.

This has been a good debate which will be warmly welcomed by all the agencies working in this field. It will send out a clear signal that hon. Members of all parties are worried about drug dependence, about rising crime and about the quality of people's lives. The lives of our citizens should not be blighted by drug misuse, and it is wrong that the many people who have never taken drugs in their lives should have those lives disrupted by the criminals who push drugs to young people. Most people in this country reject drugs, and are determined to do something about them and to make sure that the lives of our young people are saved.

2.14 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr. Eric Forth): I immediately apologise to the House for being unable to be present for the early part of the debate. I decided—I hope that hon. Members will approve—to honour a commitment to appear at a special educational needs conference in London this morning.

Mr. George Howarth: Wearing that tie?

Mr. Forth: I was wearing this tie, but no one was rude enough to comment on it.

In the debate, many hon. Members have taken much interest in this important issue and shared their experiences of, involvement with and commitment to helping to deal with the problem, generally on a local basis in their constituencies. If I may say so, these occasions bring out the best in the House.

I also want to express gratitude to everybody who has welcomed the White Paper, which has been put together under the inspiration and leadership of my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council. Even if hon. Members cannot agree with the detail, they have all agreed that it has marked a dramatic departure in the extent to which the Government have recommitted themselves to tackle the problems of drugs in our society. The Government welcome the support for the White Paper.

I was slightly puzzled by one or two aspects of what was said by some hon. Members, especially by the hon. Members for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) and for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks). They said that they thought that the scope of the White Paper was too limited. We went to extraordinary lengths to ensure that it was not limited.

Even a modest perusal of the White Paper and the strategy will show that the Government wanted to make sure that the problem was tackled across its whole width, to the extent that the aspects needed to deal with it, such as local drug action teams, Customs and Excise, the police, the judicial system and education—about which I shall say more in a moment—involve total expenditure in excess of some £500 million a year.

I hesitate to interrupt the consensual approach—as hon. Members know, occasionally I give way to such temptation—but throughout the debate, I have noted in passing that not only Opposition Members but some of my hon. Friends have repeatedly called for more money to be spent. That is fine and it is very respectable for hon. Members to express their concern about the issue, but have Opposition Members agreed it with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown)?

I counted that the hon. Members for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson), for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms), for Newham, North-West, for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington, for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) and for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Mrs. Golding) and even the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) all said that they wanted more money spent. I made of note of that and *Hansard* will have recorded it.

Mr. George Howarth: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way in the brief time available. If he checks

[Mr. George Howarth]

my speech and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche), he will find that we were clear about the need for the right resources, in the right place at the right time. That does not necessarily imply that additional expenditure is needed.

Mr. Forth: I am glad that we have clarified that. We will all look at *Hansard* and see just what was said and by whom.

In that case, I will not press the hon. Gentleman to do this today, because he will need to think about it, but he must tell the House what expenditure we should reduce to spend what he thinks is the right amount of money. It simply will not do for hon. Members to come to the House and say that they want more money spent. I acknowledge that some of my hon. Friends made the same plea and I say the same to them: the onus is on any hon. Member who wants more money to be spent, however worthy the cause, to identify the increase in taxation or public borrowing or the reduction in other elements of public expenditure that would be needed to fund it. That is the dilemma that the Government face.

We have sought to identify money—much of it new money—to support the White Paper strategy. We believe that we have the right amounts in the right places and deployed in the right way. Our monitoring and review will tell us over time whether we have got it right, and we are prepared to return to the issue and to make changes where changes are appropriate. That is the answer to many of the questions raised in the debate today. None of us sees our policy as being set in concrete or as one that will not change. By definition, such a policy has to be dynamic, developing and changing as we develop experience, especially locally in the drug action teams. In education, for which I speak, we must see whether we are doing the right thing and after a reasonable period, after monitoring and reviewing the situation, we shall return to the issue to see where it can be improved.

Another point that has emerged clearly from the debate has been an almost universal rejection of the arguments for the legalisation or decriminalisation of drugs, whether cannabis or other drugs. I immediately acknowledge the sincerity of the hon. Member for Newham, North-West, who put his arguments with his usual sincerity and passion. It has been pointed out that my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Duncan) has put forward a similar view in his recent excellent publication which has been produced today. Although this is a legitimate area of debate, it is clear from what has been said today that my hon. Friend's view is shared by very few colleagues.

The right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) gave me his apology for being unable to be here for this part of the debate, so we cannot explore the Liberal Democrats' embarrassment over this matter, which is a pity. I certainly welcome the strong agreement from Opposition Front Benchers and, indeed, most Opposition Members with the Government's strongly held view that there should be no compromise or change on the core issue, which is that the use of drugs in our society is unacceptable and illegal. That is one of the central messages that we wished to reinforce today and the debate has given us a good opportunity so to do.

That point brings me to education, and I hope that colleagues will forgive me for spending most of the rest of my time talking about education. We are on strong ground here. Drug education is an issue for all schools. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson), whose experience in education far exceeds mine, made the point that we cannot seek to limit the deployment of drug education to any one kind of school. We feel strongly about that as well. Although I accept that there is an element of controversy about the issue, my belief—our policy is directed in this way—is that it is essential to start drug education in primary schools.

As so many of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members have pointed out, the drugs problem is, tragically, now emerging in ever-younger age groups. Even six, seven and eight-year-olds are aware of drugs and in some cases, although I hope at this stage in an extraordinarily limited number, they may have access to and be using them. That tells me that it is vital that we have a drugs education policy in our primary schools so that very young children do not hear about drugs only from the wrong sources but hear about them from the right sources—authority figures and respected teachers who can tell them about drugs in a structured way within the curriculum. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, South (Mr. Ottaway) made that point as well. I hope that he accepts our commitment to a properly structured drug education approach in primary schools and throughout the rest of the period of compulsory education.

We are making important progress in other ways. Until now, there was a danger that many schools would feel that if they had a drugs education policy, it was a stigma and something about which they should be ashamed. The clear signs are that what we are now doing, through the work in progress, the conferences, the information that we are disseminating and the money that we are spending, to which I shall return in a moment, is already working. We are persuading schools that having a drug education policy is essential so that they can demonstrate to the parents of the children in their care that they are doing something positive about drugs. Even if none of the pupils in a school has any exposure to drugs at the moment, we can demonstrate to parents that everything is being done to ensure that their children will be equipped to resist the temptation to use drugs if and when they are offered them. There is a sea change taking place in education in schools in that very respect.

Some hon. Members have suggested that there is a paradox or contradiction in that drugs are illegal, as is drug use—that is central to the message that we want to get across in schools—but we want schools to be able to counsel, advise and support young people when they feel that that is necessary. The hon. Member for Newham, North-East raised the matter. I can see immediately that it could be a difficult issue. I believe, however, that there is no contradiction—nor need there be—in asking our teachers and schools generally to educate young people in what drugs are, the dangers that they pose and the fact that they are illegal and should not be used. At the same time, schools should still be able to give support, advice and help where that is appropriate, and to use their discretion in doing so.

We have made it clear in our circular that where drug use is evident in schools, especially if it is dealing of any sort, the police should be informed. We are, after all, talking about illegal substances. If we attempted to argue

a different case, we would quickly find ourselves in difficulty. We would be asking teachers somehow to put themselves in the position of condoning the use of an illegal substance even if that were somehow to help the pupil. I do not think that there is the degree of contradiction that the hon. Member for Newham, North-East suggested.

The issue was considered carefully between the production of the draft circular and that of the circular itself. Having spoken to many teachers, my feeling is that they can live with a problem that will occasionally arise locally. I am sure that they can still find and will find—they are dedicated and committed to doing so—ways in which to help young people.

We have issued a circular of guidance to schools. We have issued also the digest of materials, which I hope will be helpful to teachers in finding sources of information. We have put in place funding, in the form of grants for education support and training, of about £6 million. Much play has been made about that by colleagues who have taken £6 million, divided it by the total number of schools and produced a footling figure. To take that approach is to misunderstand the nature of the funding.

The programme is designed to do several things, but its purpose principally is to put in place a facility to help to educate teachers more about how to deploy drug education in our schools. We are not talking about a per-school figure. Instead, it is a fund that will, in the normal way, be made available to schools and local education authorities so as to develop a training programme. I am sure that everyone would agree with that.

We are also using some of the money to support 16 imaginative new drug projects, run by local education authorities throughout the country. We have done that in truancy areas, which the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green mentioned. I believe that we have done so to some considerable success. We recognise that we must stimulate schools and local education authorities to find ever-better ways of dealing with problems such as truancy or drug abuse, distilling that best practice and disseminating the results throughout education so that we benefit from the experience that has been developed by schools and authorities. That is a good and imaginative use of the funds that are available.

I have time only to answer one or two of the specific issues that have been raised during the debate. I undertake to write to hon. Members who have raised specific questions soon after the conclusion of the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), whose work has rightly been praised throughout the debate—I add my praise because I am aware of the length and extent of his commitment on these issues and to the work of the all-party group, which he chairs—expressed concern about Ofsted. I am confident that Ofsted, although it is a separate Department of State over which we have no control, and rightly in my view, will want through its chief inspector to ensure that its inspectors are properly equipped and trained to deal with the new responsibility that the chief inspector has taken on gladly, to ensure that the drug education policy is dealt with properly and comprehensively.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes will also know that Ofsted is currently reviewing its framework of inspections for schools. Although the draft framework is still in the consultative phase, I understand that in its final form it will indeed contain a specific reference to drugs and to drugs education, and that will therefore provide the vital link that is necessary between the responsibility that we are laying on schools to have a drug education policy and the role that Ofsted will play in looking at that, assessing it and commenting on it to ensure that, as far as possible, all schools will respond positively, as I am confident they will, to the responsibility that we have laid on them.

I believe that the debate has been timely. I think that it has brought out well the fact that the House—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, without Question put.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That the Speaker shall—

(1) at the sitting on Wednesday 14th June put the Question on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Howard relating to the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 1995 not later then Ten o'clock; and

(2) at the sitting on Thursday 15th June put the Question on the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Gummer relating to the draft Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1995 not later than Seven o'clock. —*[Mr. Wells.]*

STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That Mr. Quentin Davies, Mr. Iain Duncan-Smith, Mr. John Evans, Sir Archibald Hamilton, Sir Terence Higgins, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. John Morris, Mr. Tony Newton, Mr. Stanley Orme and Mrs. Ann Taylor be members of the Select Committee on Standards in Public Life.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

Hon. Members: Object.

LIAISON

Ordered,

That Mr. Clive Soley be added to the Liaison Committee. —*[Mr. Wells.]*

South Asia

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Wells.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth): I am privileged this afternoon to be able to move the Adjournment on United Kingdom policy in south Asia. My hon. Friend the Minister and I have worked together over many years in many different fields.

The world is becoming a smaller place day by day. We are told today that we are a global village. We are an interdependent world, where great commercial decisions are made in one part of the world and enacted in another, all in the twinkling of an eye through electronic signals, through satellites, and all the technological advances that we now see. Although the world is becoming smaller daily, and great shifts of capital and money flow across the globe, the world is also experiencing something entirely different.

Great nations and states that had a great number of people attached to them are disintegrating into smaller and smaller units. People in those great geopolitical and national bodies are beginning to find that they want separate identities, sometimes, and cultural roots with which they want to identify, and to create for themselves an identity of which they can be proud. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, new nation states have emerged. We have seen that in Yugoslavia and elsewhere in the world. We have a dichotomy: on the one hand, the world is becoming a smaller place, with great matters of the moment being decided in the twinkling of an eye, and at the same time we see the world becoming a more complicated place, where different groups are trying to seek their own identity.

South Asia faces the same challenges. We need to pause here and ask ourselves why that is happening. Part of the reason is that we pioneered economic liberalism across the world, and with that comes greater freedom. People want to make their own decisions. They do not want to be controlled from the centre. They want to make commercial, economic and social choices at a smaller level. Therefore, the great sweep of liberalism that has swept across the world—privatisation and so on—will inevitably lead to smaller and smaller units wanting to make their own commercial and other decisions.

I would not be surprised if by 2000 there are several hundred members of the United Nations, while curiously at the same time the great multinationals—the mega-multinationals—will be making decisions on behalf of the same people and something else happening thousands of miles away in the twinkling of an eye. The paradox of our age is that, as we liberalise, we are also fractionalising.

I say that as a preface to my comments because, unless we understand and recognise that, foreign policy-making will become more and more complicated. We have seen the problems that have emerged in Russia and Bosnia and we must understand that 19th century diplomacy and perhaps even 20th century diplomacy are not enough as those great pioneering, technological, social and information changes take place across the world.

We have pioneered technology, but are we pioneering our values about human rights violations and abuses, and about people being killed? I do not think so. It was in that context that I thought that I should take the opportunity to bring this subject to the Floor of the House.

In particular, I should like to talk about two countries. In one, I must declare an interest, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have visited the place. I was born in Sri Lanka, which became independent in 1948. It has been a democracy since 1922. It has 20 million people, of whom about 5 million are Tamil. For a long period under British rule, they lived peacefully side by side. They made great strides and economic and other progress, but, for the past 12 years, Sri Lanka has been in a state of civil war.

Thirty thousand people have been killed. Presidents, Opposition leaders, Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament have been killed. I must commend and congratulate President Chandrika Kumaratunga for her recent initiative in trying to bring peace to that troubled island. We thought that finally the situation had come under control and that there would be peace in the island, which should be one of the greatest economic miracles in south Asia. Sadly, however, it is not to be.

On 19 April, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam unilaterally broke the ceasefire and started a war again. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary have condemned the LTTE for what happened. Three hundred civilian and military people and 100 LTTE fighters have been killed. A whole village was massacred. Forty-two people died in Kavlawa.

What are we doing about it? Are we to sit here, supine and powerless, and watch what is going on and on? I wonder—I hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you do not take this comment too cynically—whether we care when brown people kill other brown people, or whether we just say, "It is their internal problem; let them sort it out."

For 12 years, the country in which I was born has undergone the most awful suffering. Last week in Pakistan, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, 600 people were killed in Karachi. Do we care know about it? Do we know about it? Do we report it? Is it in our consciousness? Are our media concerned? I have people of Pakistani, Indian and Sri Lankan origin in my constituency. Are we concerned about what is happening? Should we be concerned? I am not happy that we have allowed that position to continue for 12 years in Sri Lanka and that we should allow anything similar to start to happen in Pakistan. It is timely that I should bring the matter to the Floor of the House to find out what we can do about it.

As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Pakistan was created by different groups of people: the Punjabis, Sindis, Baluchis and Mohajirs. The Mohajirs in particular sacrificed their land, families and wealth in India after partition, moving over to create the new state of Pakistan. By and large, they control the state of Karachi and part of Sind province. They are the foundation of the economic engine of that country. Today, however, 20 years after the India-Pakistan war ceased, 200,000 Mohajirs are still in refugee camps in Bangladesh. An entire generation has been left to languish in those camps without anyone being concerned about those people. No one has bothered to do something to try to get them out of the camps. We cannot allow that to continue. If Britain does not care or does not want to do something about it, the rest of the world will act likewise.

We should care because, more than any other nation, we have historic ties with those countries. The ordinary people of those countries look to Britain for guidance and leadership. We should care because we still are and will continue to be a leading member of the Commonwealth. Those people, too, are members of the Commonwealth. We should care because we are a civilised nation and, as such, we should ensure that human rights violations and abuses do not occur. We should also care because we trade with those nations and it is important not only to them but to us and our employment prospects. We have recently invested in those countries and it is a great paradox that we should, on the one hand, encourage British companies to invest in those nations and undertake joint ventures with them when, on the other, we watch, almost supinely, as the edifice of those nations falls apart.

Sri Lanka is a good example of such waste, because it could have had a good future, but it is falling apart yet again. The President has done her best, but that is not enough. It is obvious that others should use their good offices and influence to do something.

We cannot continue to remain powerless. For many years, it has been the tradition of the Government—I make no criticism of my right hon. and hon. Friends—to excuse inaction on the ground that we have not been asked for advice or to use our good offices to bring about a settlement. Our other excuse is that it is an internal matter. That may be so, but if a nation is disintegrating into violence and people are committing acts of which we disapprove, at a certain point some sensible people must say that that is not only damaging Sri Lanka but damaging our commercial and other interests.

Do we send gunboats? No, because we do not have the gunboats to send. By what other means can we help? Our country possesses experienced statesmen and women and we should use them. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict went on for years and years, but, suddenly, two Norwegian doctors got involved and used their good offices to bring the sides together. Today there is a measure of peace in the middle east. We should do the same in Sri Lanka, because we are respected and influential. We may not have gunboats, but we still have clout and still punch above our weight.

We punch above our weight at the United Nations and the European Union, and we should do the same in south Asia. We should tell Sri Lanka and Pakistan that we have experienced people—not in government—who could be used to bring their internal problems to a settlement. We have a great many such people not only in this House but in the other place who should be encouraged to use their experience to bring the people of south Asia together to achieve peace.

Although we may not have been asked to do that, certain catalysts could encourage the process. The Governments in question may consider that, in the circumstances, their pride and dignity must be saved, so they appear entrenched and intransigent. With influence, friendship and respect we can encourage those Governments to ask for quiet, behind-the-doors advice, so that the experience found in both our Houses could be used for the betterment of our people in south Asia.

2.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): I very much welcome this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) takes a keen interest in foreign affairs generally and is understandably an expert when it comes to matters relating to south Asia. The debate provides a welcome opportunity to look at our policy towards south Asia and to highlight the important changes that have occurred there in recent years. It is an important region to all of us.

We share many Commonwealth colleagues in south Asia: India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Economically, the countries of south Asia are moving rapidly, transforming their economies with privatisation, deregulation and structural reform. They are all entering the global economy and with growing impact. Their growing impact is reflected here and our economic and commercial links with them are vital to us. In 1994, total exports to south Asia from the United Kingdom were worth about £2 billion.

The emerging commercial links have to be set alongside the traditional relationships epitomised by the substantial communities of people whose origins lie in south Asia and who have made their homes in the United Kingdom, and our historical links with the area. The south Asian community is by far the largest ethnic group in Britain. Understandably, these communities are concerned by the political and economic situation in certain countries in south Asia, as well as about human rights there. My hon. Friend mentioned concerns about Karachi and elsewhere, which frequently take a specific and personalised form that is well understood.

We continue to uphold and promote human rights in discussion with the various Governments, but we are equally vigilant to ensure that the United Kingdom does not become a safe haven for those people who promote terrorist activities in south Asia. We are determined that there should never be any suggestion that London or the United Kingdom is some sort of safe haven for those who promote terrorism elsewhere in the world and we shall be redoubling our efforts to ensure that that does not happen.

We provide substantial aid programmes in south Asia. The Indian programme is our largest bilateral programme in the world. Bangladesh has our second largest programme and Pakistan has our third largest aid programme in Asia. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary visited south Asia in January and his visit confirmed his view that the British aid programme is effective and focused on the need to promote real economic development. Indeed, we provide substantial aid programmes for other parts of the area such as Nepal, and we have close links with the Maldives who are good friends of this country.

We share common membership of the Commonwealth with south Asian countries. It is of note that the population of south Asia is not just 20 per cent. of the population of the world. In fact, 80 per cent. of the population of the Commonwealth is within and from south Asia. So, south Asia is of very considerable importance to us as it is to the world. The countries of south Asia play more than their fair part in United Nations peacekeeping, an increasingly important element of foreign policy in the world today. Three of the top six peacekeeping contributors come from south Asia.

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

Of course we are to some extent concerned about south Asia. We are concerned about the continuing tension between India and Pakistan, which has an impact on the entire south Asian region. We very much regret that India and Pakistan have not signed the non-proliferation treaty. We regret that the arms race continues and that India and Pakistan continue to spend on arms money which could be better spent on economic development. We regret that we cannot point to more significant progress, but we shall continue to urge India and Pakistan to prevent the escalation of a potentially dangerous deadly and costly arms race. Solutions cannot be imposed. Problems can be solved only through negotiation between the two countries, which we have made every effort to encourage.

Since September, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I have met separately our counterparts in both countries nine times. We have persistently and consistently urged India and Pakistan to resume the dialogue that they began in January 1994. We are disappointed that our efforts have not yet borne fruit but encouraged that the President of Pakistan and the Indian Prime Minister were able to meet in the margins of the recent meeting in Delhi of the South Asia Association for Regional Co-operation. We hope that they will restart talks soon because much depends on that, and we will continue to encourage them to do so.

As to Kashmir, we share the concerns of many in the House. We have worked hard to encourage progress and are heartened by steps taken by the Indian Government to improve human rights, but a solution cannot be reached without agreement between India and Pakistan. We have consistently called for a genuine political process in Kashmir. The Indian Government have announced their intention to hold elections in Kashmir this year and they could provide a possible opportunity for progress—but elections are a possible means to an end, not an end in themselves. It is crucial to have a genuine political process. Dialogue, not violence, is the way ahead.

Apart from those regional concerns, bilateral relations with the countries of south-east Asia are excellent, although we have individual concerns about the well-being of some of them. My hon. Friend mentioned in particular Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Our main objective in Sri Lanka in recent years has been to help promote a sustainable political solution to the brutal ethnic conflict in the north-east. We greatly welcomed President Kumaratunga's courageous commitment to seek peace by engaging the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in political discussion. Her objective was to address not only the symptoms of conflict but its causes. She took physical and political risks to offer the Tamil people a peaceful way to address their legitimate grievances.

The cessation of hostilities on 8 January was warmly welcomed on the island and by all friends of Sri Lanka. In particular, the people of Jaffna made clear their hope that a real chance of peace was now attainable. That makes the LTTE's unilateral resumption of hostilities on 19 April profoundly regrettable. Violence will not provide a solution to Sri Lanka's problems. We strongly condemn LTTE attacks on Sri Lankan Government forces and its senseless massacre of 42 innocent civilians on 26 May. Any return to ethnic cleansing in the north and east deserves the condemnation of the entire international community.

Despite that major setback, we welcome the Sri Lankan Government's continuing commitment to a negotiated solution to the conflict. The LTTE cannot afford to ignore that opportunity, and we urge it to end the fighting and return to negotiation. As to the vital question of rehabilitation in the north and east, the United Kingdom and other international donors stand ready to help—but can do so only in the context of a political settlement to the tragic conflict. The longer the fighting continues, the greater the delay in relief reaching communities that need it most.

Human rights remain a major concern, particularly in times of conflict. We welcome the priority accorded by the Sri Lankan Government to improving their human rights record, which is a positive and important signal. It will remain vital for the security forces, despite danger and provocation, to exercise restraint and to retain the confidence of civilian communities. We know from experience in Northern Ireland how difficult and vital that is.

We welcome the Sri Lankan Government's efforts to liberalise and modernise the economy and encourage foreign investment. Despite the continuing conflict, Sri Lanka remains an important market, accounting for £154 million of British exports in 1994. We have much to offer in the project sector and our privatisation expertise can help in the restructuring of public enterprises. I am sure that, in addition to all our other links with Sri Lanka, our commercial links will continue to go from strength to strength.

Just as we are extremely good friends with Sri Lanka, so too are we extremely good friends with Pakistan. We cannot deny that Pakistan and its Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, face many challenges, but media coverage in this country often distorts the real situation. Pakistan is uniquely placed as a modern, moderate Islamic state, which is a major member of the Commonwealth. The UK stands firm in its support of Pakistan and its commitment to developing along moderate Islamic lines.

Of course, it is no secret that there are particularly serious and complex problems in Karachi, to which my hon Friend rightly referred. The roots of those problems are economic, ethnic, religious and political and we urge all sides to exercise restraint, renounce violence and enter serious negotiations to seek a sustainable political solution for the problems that have been causing the peoples of Karachi so much difficulty.

Commercial links between ourselves and Pakistan are strengthening. Several major British companies, including ICI, Glaxo, Shell, Lever, Wellcome and Courtaulds, have traded in Pakistan for many years. More recently, the privatised utilities like British Gas, Midlands Electricity, the National Grid Company and National Power have shown a keen interest.

This year has been particularly notable for concrete expressions of confidence in Pakistan's future. National Power invested more than $100 million as the leading investor in the Hub power project, the largest private power development in Asia and of fundamental importance to the economy of Pakistan. In the textile sector, ICI is investing $100 million to expand its production of polyester fibre. Other major projects are in the pipeline for UK companies in the power and financial sectors.

Commercial ties are substantial and deep-rooted. Pakistan is a priority market for us. The UK is the second largest foreign investor in Pakistan and exports to Pakistan are up 38 per cent. in the past 5 years. The Government fully support this partnership. In November 1994, during Prime Minister Bhutto's visit, we signed an investment promotion and protection agreement with Pakistan. Our trade and aid policies support Pakistan's economic development on a bilateral basis and multilaterally, through institutions such as the World bank and the European Union. Interestingly, Pakistan is the Commonwealth Development Corporation's largest single country portfolio.

Of our other friends in south Asia, we value our mature, positive relationship with India—a country with which we share solid democratic traditions. Bilateral relations are probably better than at any time since independence. We have been working closely with India on a range of issues from tackling terrorism to protecting the environment. The close ties were highlighted by the Prime Minister's visit to India in 1993, during which he was guest of honour on Republic day.

India began an economic reform programme in 1991 and has taken solid steps towards realising its vast economic potential. We have ensured that UK business is in an excellent position to take advantage.

Our two Prime Ministers set up the Indo-British partnership initiative in January 1993. The aim was to increase awareness of the new commercial opportunities available in both countries. Since then, UK exports to India have increased by almost 40 per cent. UK investment approvals have increased tenfold since 1992. We always were a large historical investor, but we are now the second biggest new investor—significant new investments are planned by British companies in the power, telecommunications and infrastructure sectors.

The success of the Indo-British partnership initiative has been recognised by its being followed on by a permanent body, the Indo British Partnership in 1995, to see expansion of co-operation in field of science and technology.

As to Bangladesh, again, we are close friends in the Commonwealth and we welcome its Government's efforts to press ahead with economic and administrative reform. It is important that democratic political process is maintained. The current political deadlock is worrying and again we hope that a peaceful and lasting solution can be found.

Political stability in Bangladesh is obviously essential to attract foreign investment. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary and I have stressed that to many people in Bangladesh, on all sides.

Again, we are also encouraged by the growth of bilateral trade. The political crisis has not seriously damaged the economy so far. In 1994, UK exports were up significantly to £55.7 million. The United Kingdom is the largest exporter to Bangladesh in the European Union and it is also Bangladesh's third largest export market, behind the United States and Germany.

Our relations with Bangladesh are excellent. There has been a steady flow of visitors in both directions. In addition to the Foreign Secretary and the Bangladeshi Prime Minister, the Princess Royal visited Bangladesh in March and the Bangladeshi President and Finance Minister visited London in April and May respectively.

Again, our relations with both Nepal and the Maldives are also excellent. South Asia is a region in which we have many good friends and where we continue to wish to play a full part in making a contribution to the peoples and trading with them. They are good friends in the Commonwealth and we have much work to do together.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at one minute to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Monday 12 June 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

RAF Valley

1. **Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received about the impact on the local economy of the market-testing exercise at RAF Valley. [26031]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Gwilym Jones): Several, and of course my right hon. Friend met the hon. Gentleman and a delegation from the area last week.

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: I thank the Minister for that reply. I also thank the Secretary of State for meeting the delegation from my constituency last week. I am sure that the Secretary of State will agree that we put forward an extremely strong case for the retention of jobs at RAF Valley and for requesting the Ministry of Defence to phase in its proposals for market testing, otherwise it will be very difficult for us to compete effectively in an area of high unemployment.

Does the Minister accept that what the Secretary of State told us on Tuesday should be confirmed? The Secretary of State said that he is prepared to use his political influence, both with his colleague the Secretary of State for Defence and, if necessary, with his colleagues in the Cabinet, to ensure that that very strong case is accepted and that he accepts that maximising the number of local jobs at RAF Valley is a top priority.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend is certainly more than willing to ensure that our colleagues at the Ministry of Defence are fully aware of the case being put forward. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that the training and enterprise council is undertaking a useful skills audit. That audit and any other points that are raised must be considered carefully so that the RAF's operational needs can be best met while, at the same time, seeking to ensure as much local employment as possible.

Mr. Ron Davies: I endorse the views of the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Jones) and I assure the Minister that the campaign on behalf of RAF Valley has the full support of Opposition Front Benchers.

As the Ministry of Defence proposals would have cost some 600 to 700 jobs in Anglesey, why was the Welsh Office not consulted in advance of the announcement? Can the Minister confirm that there is a major problem with the market-testing programme, in that there is a shortage of local skills? Now that the local training and enterprise council has completed its skills audit and, I understand, has told the Welsh Office that there is a need for deferment, will the Minister accept that the proposals for a four to five-year deferment are reasonable and would allow the local community to prepare itself by developing the necessary skills? Does the Minister realise that anything less than that will be an absolute betrayal of a community who have served the country loyally and well?

Mr. Jones: The Ministry of Defence's announcement comes under the consultation arrangements and I assure the hon. Gentleman that the Welsh Office is fully involved in that consultation process. We have already agreed a deferment with the Ministry of Defence, in that the consultation period will now be extended until the end of June. I am sure that that time will be used very effectively to ensure that all the points are considered properly.

Unemployment

2. **Mr. Barry Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are currently unemployed (a) in Wales and (b) in Alyn and Deeside. [26032]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. John Redwood): In April 1995, there were 108,094 unemployed people in Wales and 2,458 unemployed in the district of Alyn and Deeside. Those figures are well down on those for last year and we wish to see them go even lower.

Mr. Jones: I remind the right hon. Gentleman of the loss of 140 jobs at NK International in my constituency and the loss of some 350 jobs at Kilroe Engineering this month. On that basis, will he consider granting development area status to my constituency? In that context, will he pledge his Department's and his Government's assistance with regard to Raytheon Jets' proposal to build a service station at Broughton in my constituency? Will he join me in trying to save hundreds of existing jobs?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman of course has my assurance that I will do anything within my legal powers to help with the Raytheon situation. He knows that I have intervened in the past, and I am happy to do so again to try to promote the area. I think that Raytheon can get a lot of good work from the very talented and skilled work force already in the area. The hon. Gentleman has my assurance on that point.

I do not think that there is a strong case for assisted area status, because I am delighted to say that unemployment in his area is well below the Welsh and the United Kingdom average; it is also well below the European average and has continued to fall. Despite the heavy blow of job losses that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, unemployment has fallen month after month and the unemployment rate in the Shotton, Flint and Rhyl area is now 6.8 per cent. I want to see the unemployment rate lower still, but it is good by national standards.

Mr. Colvin: Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is still scope for creating new jobs in the countryside in Wales as a whole and in the constituency of the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones)? Does my right hon. Friend think it is fair that England has been promised a White Paper on the rural economy? Why is Wales being sold short? Why did the White Paper not include the

subjects of Wales or forestry, which is an important industry for Wales? Can my right hon. Friend guarantee to the House that any initiatives or incentives that are available to England as a result of the White Paper's recommendations will be available to Wales also?

Mr. Redwood: My hon. Friend is quite right: if good initiatives are being introduced in England that we are not already undertaking in Wales, we would want to adopt them in Wales as well. I give him that assurance again, as I have in the past to the House. My officials are keeping in close contact with the work in England. Of course, we had already set out a policy in Wales some time before the English initiative; but if there are good new ideas, I want Wales to be included in them. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Morgan: As the newly unemployed in Wales will soon be losing their income support and mortgage assistance, does the Secretary of State's call at the Welsh Tory party conference at the weekend for the home-owning quiet majority to be celebrated, and not taxed, mean that he is breaking ranks with the rest of the Cabinet on the issue, as on so many other Government policies?

Mr. Redwood: No, I am not. The hon. Gentleman took a long time to remember his silly point today, which is why he sat on the Front Bench for such a long time after you called him, Madam Speaker. I am strongly in favour of every policy that the Government are putting forward. Of course, we believe in home ownership, unlike the Opposition, who undermined home owners whenever possible when they were in government.

Rail Privatisation

3. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has made to ensure that track services in Wales are maintained in the event of rail privatisation. [26033]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend and I have met the franchising director and I have also met the chairman of Railtrack plc.

Mr. Jon Owen Jones: Does the Minister realise that services are threatened not only by privatisation but by the Government's dithering while privatisation is being discussed? When will the Welsh Office decide where the new freight depot will be in south Wales, if we are to have one? I have written to the Welsh Office supporting the Pengam site, but whether it is Pengam or Magor, the decision needs to be taken rapidly. Welsh business depends on it.

Mr. Gwilym Jones: I would rush to reassure the hon. Gentleman that there is no dithering about the rail freight depot in south Wales; we look forward to a decision being taken. Nor is there any dithering on privatisation generally, which undoubtedly will bring tremendous benefits to the rail travellers of Britain.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Does the Minister agree that for track services through central Wales to be viable, it is essential for Regional Railways Central to provide a decent standard of service for passengers? Does he agree that a service that provides no on-station information, lavatories or telephones, and, at times when one expects tourists, leaves literally hundreds of people standing in inadequate trains, is not of an acceptable standard?

Mr. Jones: The hon. and learned Gentlemen does exactly my job for me: he makes the case for privatisation. There has not been the incentive to provide that service before, because the passenger has not been key. In future, the passenger will be key.

Mr. Rogers: Does the Minister not accept that in the south Wales valleys in particular the general morphology militates against effective communications? [HON. MEMBERS: "Morphology?"] It is the shape of the valleys—something that hon. Members might not understand. It militates against effective communication and transport problems. Will he ensure that, in the unlikely event of privatisation, there is effective investment in track maintenance as well as the maintenance of services?

Mr. Jones: Investment is specifically the responsibility of Railtrack, but I certainly do not accept the surmise of the hon. Gentleman's question and I have a very good basis for that. As he will know, two of the valleys lines run through my constituency of Cardiff, North. The hon. Gentleman's constituents and mine will benefit by the removal of restrictions and increasing incentives, which will lead to a better service for passengers using the valley lines and all railways.

Public Spending Review

4. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales who in his Department is responsible for the Government's fundamental review of public spending; and if he will make a statement. [26034]

Mr. Redwood: I am responsible for reviewing public spending in Wales and for reporting on it to the House. I have especially concentrated on reducing overheads in the Welsh Office and in quangos. Any conclusions from general UK reviews will be incorporated in Wales where appropriate.

Mr. Jenkin: I thank my right hon. Friend for putting himself in charge—unlike in some Departments, where officials are expected to take a lead. Does my right hon. Friend agree that control of public expenditure has gone hand in hand with a dramatic revival of the Wales economy? Would not Labour's determination to increase public expenditure put that revival at risk?

Mr. Redwood: Yes. Of course unreasonable increases in public expenditure would threaten the recovery. It would mean borrowing too much, which would force up interest rates and damage business, or taxing too much, which would also damage business—or a combination of the two. That is exactly why some Labour Members are now extremely shy about saying that they believe in more public spending, while others—as we well know—are full of plans to spend more. Meantime, I am pleased to say that the overheads of the Countryside Council for Wales and of the Welsh Office are this year coming down by almost £2 million and £1.7 million respectively. The overheads of the Welsh Development Agency will be £1.9 million lower than two years ago.

Mr. Ray Powell: As the Secretary of State is responsible for those estimates, I wonder whether he is responsible for his statement to the Tory party conference at the weekend suggesting £100 million expenditure by Labour on a Welsh Assembly. Will the right hon. Gentleman explain to the House, nation and Principality how he came to assume that figure?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman will have to contain his excitement. I am completing my estimate of the likely cost of such an assembly and will release it shortly. I made no statement at the Conservative conference—although occasionally there is inspired journalism in Wales. I suspect that the figure will not be far from that rumoured, but I have not yet completed my estimate. I shall release it shortly.

Mr. Sweeney: In welcoming the expenditure reductions achieved by my right hon. Friend, may I ask him what steps he is taking to reduce administration costs in the health service, so that the maximum money can be spent on patient care?

Mr. Redwood: As my hon. Friend may know, we are about to lower the number of health authorities from 17 to five, which will make a material reduction in the health administrative overhead at health authority level. We are now seeing fruits from the changes that I introduced to recruitment procedures for administration and management in general, which will be welcomed on both sides of the House. I have also taken a particular interest in consultancy expenditure throughout the Welsh Office, which has fallen from £1.45 million the previous year to £800,000. If we manage to keep up the pressure, I hope that that figure will reduce further.

Mr. Wigley: Instead of kow-towing to every planted, uninspired question from every sioni siencyn on the Government Benches, will the Secretary of State put time into getting his figures right in respect of spurious estimates, such as that for a Welsh Parliament? Does the right hon. Gentleman realise that the cost of running both Chambers of the Irish Parliament this year will be £28 million and that the New Zealand Parliament costs £40 million a year? If that is the extent of the understanding of figures in the Welsh Office, is it not a good explanation of why the Government's financial controls are out of sync and unacceptable to the people of these islands?

Mr. Redwood: The hon. Gentleman will have to wait for my forecast. I shall set out exactly how it was compiled, so that the people of Wales can reach their own judgment on whether I have underdone it or overdone it.

Mr. Ron Davies: I refer the Secretary of State to recent remarks by the former Prime Minister, Lady Thatcher, in which she criticised the Government for failing to control public expenditure and for being the highest taxing Government since the war. Is that not another demonstration of how hopelessly split the Conservative party is? As its leaders no longer have confidence in each other, why on earth should the country have confidence in them? Lady Thatcher claims that she still has supporters in the Cabinet. Why does the Secretary of State not have the honesty to admit that he is one of them—or does he still profess loyalty to the present Prime Minister?

Mr. Redwood: Of course I support the present Prime Minister, and I am pleased that the Government are setting out to reduce public expenditure as a proportion of gross national product—in a way that is painful to the Labour party, because it means that we shall be able to deliver our promises to start lowering taxation while producing high-quality public services. The economy is now growing, which is, of course, the secret of success.

Unemployment

5. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the current number of unemployed in Wales; and what was the figure in December 1992. [26035]

Mr. Redwood: In April 1995, the seasonally adjusted figures for Wales were 106,900, compared with 133,400 in December 1992. This represents a fall of 26,500, or one fifth, in the unemployed total.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer, showing that there has been a 20 per cent. reduction in unemployment in Wales. Does he agree that that is due to inward investment, which has been encouraged by Wales as part of the United Kingdom's having a low corporate rate of tax, no national minimum wage and no social chapter? Does he believe that that would be helped if Wales had a Welsh Assembly, which would make it one of the most over-governed countries in the world?

Mr. Redwood: On the contrary: it would put a lot of investors off, at home and abroad. The growth has come about from domestic companies and from inward investment. It has been marked in small companies and in self-employment, as well as in the larger inward investors. They all benefit from our attitude to decent wages and social costs under sensible control.

Mr. Llew Smith: The Department of Employment recently provided me with a list of all job vacancies advertised in Blaenau Gwent, and their hourly wage rates. The average hourly wage rate for those vacancies was just over £3. Can the Secretary of State inform families in my constituency how they can bring up children on that kind of money?

Mr. Redwood: If that were the sole income coming into a family, it would clearly need supplementing—it would probably be supplemented by the benefit system. But it would be even crueller to make those sorts of jobs illegal so that the people currently enjoying them could not even have them. Doing that would not suddenly lead to a doubling of wages—the jobs would disappear altogether.

The hon. Gentleman makes no reference to the fact that many thousands of new manufacturing jobs at good wages have been created in Wales in recent years as a result of our economic policies.

Dr. Howells: Will the Secretary of State cast his mind across to 600 of those jobs, created in the electronics industry, and look carefully at the plight in which Race Electronics in my constituency finds itself? The company has been at the leading edge of burgeoning Welsh electronics production but faces dire difficulties at the moment.

Mr. Redwood: Yes, of course I shall look at that. I have already asked for more information and briefing on the problem of that company. I am told that there is a reasonable chance that the business will continue, and that it is hoped that a new buyer will be found to take it on. I am told that there is some strength in the underlying business. I hope that that is true; I shall make further inquiries and keep the hon. Gentleman posted.

District General Hospitals

6. **Mr. Dafis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he will take to safeguard the position of smaller district general hospitals; and if he will make a statement. [26036]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Mr. Rod Richards): I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave on 16 January 1995, *Official Report*, column *303*. Any substantial change in the use of a hospital requires extensive public consultation before it can be put into effect. If the proposals for change do not secure the agreement of local community health councils, they must be referred to my right hon. Friend for decision.

Mr. Dafis: I hope that the Minister is aware that Bronglais hospital in Aberystwyth is the smallest district general hospital in England or Wales—or, indeed, in most of the United Kingdom—and that its resulting higher unit costs are liable to put it at something of a competitive disadvantage. Is he further aware of the chronic underfunding of capital works in the Ceredigion and Mid-Wales NHS trust, and that this, in addition to the other factor, could lead to a gradual spiral of decline in the scope and quality of the provision of services in the hospital and the trust? Will he undertake to have a careful look at the funding situation and ensure, following careful study, that no such decline occurs—bearing in mind the key strategic importance of Aberystwyth as a centre on the west coast of Wales?

Mr. Richards: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, I visited the Bronglais hospital in Aberystwyth—it was my first visit on being appointed a Minister at the Welsh Office. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that we look carefully at the provision of services and the purchasing of those services by health authorities. We shall obviously keep an eye on the way in which Dyfed health authority purchases services for the hon. Gentleman's constituents.

Mrs. Clwyd: May I ask the Minister to examine the provision of services in Aberdare general hospital? Although there has been general consultation in the Cynon valley, there is grave dissatisfaction with the failure of the health authority to give dates for the reopening of wards. In addition, the authority has failed to give assurances that day surgery will be carried out under general anaesthetic at the hospital, as it was in the past. What was once a thriving general hospital is now gradually running down. That has happened while the Minister has had responsibility for health in Wales. I ask him to examine these issues as a matter of urgency.

Mr. Richards: The provision of health care and services in Wales is better than it has ever been. I am sure that the hon. Lady has the wherewithal to take up individual cases with the appropriate health authority.

Local Government Reorganisation

7. **Mr. Murphy:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he last met local authority associations in Wales to discuss the reorganisation services following the setting up of the shadow authorities. [26037]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend and I last met both the local authority associations on 18 January 1994 when a range of issues relating to local government and reorganisation was discussed.

Mr. Murphy: Does the Minister agree that there is widespread concern in Wales about the proposed reorganisation of the fire service? Does he accept that the proposed reorganisation is opposed by those who work in the service, by the eight fire authorities and by all the new 22 unitary authorities? Does he accept also that there is now a case to re-examine the proposal to ensure that there is consensus among the people of Wales on a vital service?

Mr. Jones: I entirely agree with the hon. Gentleman about the importance of fire brigades throughout Wales. I know well that the proposals that are now being made will be most carefully studied to ensure that there is no reduction in the level of services that the fire brigades in Wales provide.

Mr. Knapman: When the new unitary authorities are in place, will there be anything to stop the new councillors from quadrupling their allowances and expenses?

Mr. Jones: My hon. Friend puts his finger on a most important problem—that of trying to curb the natural tendencies of Labour councillors to do what they do rather than what they profess to say they will do.

Mr. Roy Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that, by independent assessment, the Gwent fire service has been judged to be the most effective response force in the country? Is it not logical, therefore, to leave it as an independent force, preferably conterminous with the new police authority—that is, Gwent plus the Rhymney Valley? That would surely make far more sense than lumping the Gwent fire service with other local services.

Mr. Jones: I fully share the hon. Gentleman's regard for the importance of the standards that are being achieved by the Gwent force. I have complete confidence that there will be no changes that will result in any reduction of the levels of service that must be achieved, are being achieved and, I am sure, will continue to be achieved in Gwent and elsewhere in Wales.

Mr. Win Griffiths: When the Minister met representatives of local government in Wales, did he take some time to praise education authorities—especially Labour ones—for the pioneering work that they are doing in providing nursery education, which is achieving far better provision than the average for the rest of the United Kingdom?

Will the Minister be prepared to provide the new authorities with extra resources to enable all three and four-year-olds to have a nursery place and to support the voluntary sector? Such provision will give three and four-year-olds a real head start in life, which is what Baroness Thatcher promised to provide over 20 years ago. Will the Minister now implement the proposal?

Mr. Jones: I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman has pre-empted Question 9, tabled by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), which relates exactly to nursery education. I suggest that he bide his time and wait until that question is reached. In the meanwhile, I content myself with the observation that I notice that all education authorities in Wales have made sufficient provision in their education funding, despite their fears and claims beforehand, to ensure that the teachers' pay increase is paid in full in each of the eight education authorities in Wales, and that they are now turning their attention to increasing allowances for councillors.

8. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the consultation period referred to in his recent announcement of the Welsh Office's aim to vary local authority boundaries is to commence; and if he will make a statement. [26038]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The consultation period ended on 5 May 1995 and we are now currently giving our consideration to all the representations.

Mr. Llwyd: I thank the Minister for that reply, but ensconced as he is in the morphology of Cardiff, North, he will be pathetically out of touch with Welsh public opinion. The fact is that there are now fewer councillors under the unitary authority system than there are people on his quangos. Does he realise that that is a very bad thing for democracy and that the people of Wales view it with dismay and, indeed, disgust? May I tell him that in no circumstances will the people of Wales put up with any more gerrymandering to lessen the number of democratically elected people in Wales?

Mr. Jones: I waited patiently to try to hear a question from the hon. Gentleman, but I do not think that I have heard one. I would correct him on one of his factual errors. Yes, my right hon. Friend makes appointments to quangos; he made some 850 appointments. That is significantly less than the number of councillors in the new unitary authorities in Wales. I note the insult from Plaid Cymru towards the capital city of Wales. The hon. Gentleman cannot possibly suggest that Cardiff, North is out of touch with public opinion in the Principality.

Mr. Donald Anderson: Is the Minister aware that local authorities, our councillors, our electorates, are going through a period of great turmoil as a result of local government reorganisation and unitary authorities? In those circumstances, is there not a case for slowing down the usual work of the Local Government Commission, in terms of councillors per seat, so that the existing structure can be more consolidated?

Mr. Jones: I am sure that the work that is being taken forward by the commission will be at a wholly appropriate speed for the reorganisation of local government in Wales. As I said, in answer to the Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Llwyd), we are considering the responses to the consultation. We are looking closely at the number of councillors; I do not expect to see any significant reduction in their number. We are certainly giving close consideration to whether there should be any overall limit to the number of councillors on each council.

Nursery Education

9. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new proposals he has to improve nursery education provision. [26039]

Mr. Richards: The Government are committed to ensuring that a pre-school place is available for every four-year-old whose parents want to take it up. We are currently considering how that commitment can best be implemented in Wales.

Mr. Flynn: Why are the children of parents who live in Labour-controlled local authorities three times more likely to get places in nursery schools than the children of parents who live in Conservative-controlled authorities? Why is it that in the county of Berkshire, where Wokingham is situated, fewer than one third of the children enjoy nursery education, yet in the county of Gwent, where Newport is situated, three quarters of the children enjoy that provision? How dare the Government say that they are about to start on a crusade in education—16 years late? Would it not be better for the people of Wales and Wokingham, when the glorious day arrives and my hon. Friend the Member for Caerphilly (Mr. Davies) becomes Secretary of State for Wales, if my right hon. Friend also took over the duty as governor-general of Wokingham?

Mr. Richards: Berkshire is a Liberal-Labour-controlled local authority. I think that that is called an own goal. Conservative Members certainly recognise the benefits of pre-school education. The hon. Gentleman can be certain of one thing: when it is introduced in Wales, there will be diversity and choice. He is certainly one person who could have benefited from pre-school education. Indeed, he might even benefit from it now.

Open Government

10. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what proposals he has for advancing open government in Wales. [26040]

Mr. Richards: The Welsh Office has published and distributed widely a bilingual leaflet that explains how to make a request for information under the code of practise on access to government information. A bilingual code has also been published on openness in the NHS.

In the first nine months of operating the code, the Welsh Office provided information free of charge in response to more than 1,000 requests. Some 99 per cent. of those requests were dealt with in the target of 20 working days.

Mr. Hughes: In that case, will the Minister investigate whether the code and those principles apply to his own Department, given that, on 2 March, in the debate on Welsh affairs—at column 1236—the Secretary of State said that the Countryside Council for Wales had been

given perfectly adequate funds to meet its statutory requirements. The fact is, however, that the council had appealed privately to the Secretary of State because it did not have adequate funds even to meet its minimum requirements, let alone for what it wanted to do.

Can we have not just words, codes and charters from the Welsh Office, but open government that will reveal to us when the Secretary of State does not tell the House what has actually been going on and what the facts are?

Mr. Richards: The hon. Gentleman is poorly informed. The Countryside Council for Wales was given more and, indeed, subsequently confirmed that it had had enough. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman return to his basic data and, if he so wishes, write to the council. I am sure that, under the code of practice, it will give him the accurate information that he so direly needs.

Economic Activity

11. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for economic activity rates for (a) the south Wales valleys, (b) Wales and (c) Britain. [26041]

Mr. Redwood: I am advised that the latest figures that we have for the south Wales valleys for economically active rates come from the 1991 census of population. At that time the figure was 52.9 per cent. We have more up-to-date figures from the 1994-95 labour survey for Wales and Great Britain, which stood at 57.2 per cent. and 62.4 per cent.

Mr. Williams: The Welsh Office regularly claims that unemployment in Wales is now down to the British average, and we welcome that; but the unemployment figure tells only part of the story. When economic activity rates are taken into account—especially in the old industrial areas—about 15 per cent. can be added to the male unemployment figure, partly because of early retirement but mainly because people have been encouraged to take invalidity benefit wherever applicable.

In what way do the Government recognise those lower economic activity rates in Wales, and what will be the effect of changes caused by the introduction of incapacity benefit, which will take people off invalidity benefit and put them on to the dole queues? Does the Secretary of State accept that the economies of large areas in south Wales are performing well below capacity?

Mr. Redwood: No, I do not accept that. I think that the right hon. Gentleman is trying to sidestep the fact that unemployment is very low in his part of Wales, which is welcome. In the Carmarthen travel-to-work area, it is 4.7 per cent.; in the Llandeilo travel-to-work area, it is 5 per cent. Many hon. Members would love to have such low levels of unemployment in their constituencies: they show that our policies have been successful.

The right hon. Gentleman seems to be suggesting that all those who are properly registered as being in ill health or disabled should be forced to work. That is not our policy, although it may be Labour's. When people are genuinely disabled or in ill health, they receive benefits and they are not expected to work. It is sad that there are more disabled people in some parts of Wales, but we intend to take care of them rather than doing as the hon. Gentleman suggests.

NHS Patients

12. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients were treated by the NHS in (a) 1979 and (b) 1994. [26042]

Mr. Redwood: The national health service in Wales saw 633,000 new out-patients and treated 739,000 in-patients and day cases in 1994-95, compared with 429,000 and 381,000 respectively in 1979.

Mr. Evans: I welcome that incredible increase, but will my right hon. Friend assure the House that the money secured through any future modifications and savings in the NHS in Wales will be spent directly on patient care and not on dancing to the music of the paymasters of many Opposition Members, the health unions in Wales?

Mr. Redwood: Of course we wish to concentrate the money on patient care. One of the reasons for the success in treating so many more patients is that we have targeted much more money on ensuring that patients come first, and that more treatment is available for them. That is the overriding priority, and one that I intend to continue.

Mr. Hain: If the Secretary of State really believes that health services are improving under the Conservatives, is he living on planet Portillo or possibly planet Redwood?

Mr. Redwood: That be the lamest silly question that we have heard all day, and probably for many weeks, in the House of Commons. Of course I put the interests of patients first. Of course I am proud to come to the House and ask for more money for the national health service in Wales, which it has needed and which it has been given. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I am also keen to ensure that health services in his region are improved by new investment as well as the additional commitment of people and new treatments. That is what we shall do. The hon. Gentleman's cheap debating points demean him and the House.

Inward Investment

13. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many jobs have been created as a result of inward investment over the past five years; what were the figures for 1974 to 1979; and if he will make a statement. [26043]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Figures for 1974 to 1979 are not available. In the past five years, 852 inward investment projects have been recorded, promising almost 38,000 new jobs and capital investment of £4.5 billion. Those figures are a clear illustration of the importance of inward investment to Wales.

Mr. Greenway: I congratulate my hon. Friends on those remarkable figures. Is it not amazing that the Labour Government from 1974 to 1979 did not record their figures? No doubt they had nothing to record. My hon. Friend should continue to go for it: it must be good for jobs, good for Wales and good for the whole of Britain.

Mr. Jones: I am most grateful for my hon. Friend's congratulations. They give me the opportunity to explode another myth being peddled by the Opposition—that the jobs being brought to Wales are cheap, part-time jobs for women. They are not: the manufacturing employment pay

figures show that males are now on 99.9 per cent. of the United Kingdom average, and females in manufacturing in Wales are earning above the UK average.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Research and Development

24. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response he will make to the technology foresight panels' recommendations for additional spending on Government-funded research and development. [26055]

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (Mr. David Hunt): I have announced a technology foresight challenge fund, totalling £80 million, to which my Department will contribute half during the next three years.

Mrs. Campbell: Will the Chancellor confirm that his Government's "Forward Look" figures show that, between 1986 and projected spend in 1996, the Government will have taken almost £1 billion out of the science and technology budget? Are not the Government taking money out of science and technology in lorryloads and giving it back in jam jars?

Mr. Hunt: I do not accept that at all. The science budget, for which I am responsible, has increased by more than 30 per cent. in real terms in the past 16 years. As to the science and technology spend throughout Government, in all Departments, the hon. Lady will be aware of the effects of the review of defence spending and, indeed, the effects of the launch aid in the aerospace industry and several other factors.

The important thing is that the latest statistics, published in March, showed that more was being spent on research and development by industry, by universities and by Government.

Mr. Robert G. Hughes: Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in recognising the important impact of the technology foresight process, we should pay great tribute to Sir William Stewart, who retired last week as chief scientific adviser, who played an enormous part in making that such a great success in the wider sphere of Government scientific policy and was also a great pleasure to work with?

Mr. Hunt: I welcome the opportunity to pay tribute to the five years of distinguished service that Sir William Stewart gave as chief scientific adviser to the Government and as head of the Office of Science and Technology. His vision and leadership were instrumental in the successful establishment of the Office of Science and Technology and, with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in the publication of the White Paper, "Realising our Potential", which was so well received both within and outside the scientific community. I also take the opportunity to pay tribute to the work done by my hon. Friend during his time in office.

Mr. Battle: May I make it clear that Labour welcomes technology foresight in principle and the reports so far? We would urge the Government to enhance and carry the process forward. I ask the Minister, when can we welcome a full debate on science in the Chamber in Government time to discuss the reports? When will the Government publish practical action plans to implement the proposals of the report? When will other Ministers in other Departments welcome the reports and their recommendations, so that they are not left on the shelf in the Office of Science and Technology and ignored by Ministers in other Departments, as has happened in the past?

Mr. Hunt: I start by welcoming the hon. Gentleman's acceptance of the technology foresight exercise. I pay tribute to the many people who have played a part in bringing about what I believe to be one of the most innovative programmes ever to have taken place in this country. Of course, he will know what my right hon. and hon. Friends and I have already said about carrying forward the technology foresight message. The Government recognise the importance of science, engineering and technology. That is reflected in our response to the whole technology foresight exercise.

Citizens Charter

25. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what further plans he has to make the citizens charter justiciable. [26056]

The Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science (Mr. John Horam): The citizens charter is continuing to raise the standard of public service. Although the charter as a whole is not legally enforceable, certain provisions in specific charters are backed by legislation.

Sir Thomas Arnold: Does my hon. Friend accept that to widen the areas where the charter would be legally enforceable need not be unduly onerous in public spending terms?

Mr. Horam: Yes, that is certainly true. It need not involve any further public expenditure. What I would be concerned about is losing flexibility. We have increased credibility for the particular charters and some legislative backing in, for example, the parents charter, of which my hon. Friend will be aware. We shall continue to evolve in that direction. He will notice that more and more adjudicators have been appointed—for example, for the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise. They are bridging the gap between legal enforcement and strong voluntary enforcement.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that he can shout and bawl as much as he likes about the values and virtues of the Government's citizens charter because in the background there is another citizen, the ex-Prime Minister Lady Thatcher, who has marked the Government's record and their own charter and does not think that it adds up to a row of beans?

Mr. Horam: I do not think that the House would readily agree that I was a shouter and a bawler.

Charter Mark

26. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what changes of service have been monitored in the public services since the introduction of the charter mark. [26058]

Mr. Horam: There have been a large number of measurable improvements since the introduction of the charter mark. One charter mark winner that I visited recently, a housing benefits department, has increased customer satisfaction to 97 per cent., improved its productivity level and saved more than £2 million through improved fraud detection.

Mr. Fabricant: That is an encouraging answer. Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituents welcome the fact that when they telephone Government Departments, telephones are answered more quickly, they can find out the names of the people to whom they speak, and pamphlets are issued in English that they can understand? Does my hon. Friend agree that the constant carping and criticism from Labour Members implies that they have no desire to improve the standard of public services?

Mr. Horam: My hon. Friend is right. There has been a revolution in public services in terms of waiting times, politeness, openness and all those aspects, although I confess that we still have a little further to go in terms of plain English.

Mr. Winnick: Has the Minister given any consideration to having a negative charter mark for organisations which do not give any satisfaction? If so, what sort of negative charter mark should be given to the most discredited and unpopular Government since records began? Does the hon. Gentleman now regret joining the Tory party after so many years in the Labour party when his current party is going to lose the next election and he will certainly be out of a job?

Mr. Horam: I am delighted to be a member of an Administration who have the best economic performance that I can remember and who have improved public services beyond the imagination of the Opposition, rather than an Administration who let inflation rip and came to an end in the tragic farce of the winter of discontent.

Mr. Brandreth: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the growing popularity of the charter mark is shown by the fact that, last year, there were some 20,000 inquiries about it and some 500 firm applications? Is there scope for extending the charter mark system to organisations such as one in my constituency called the Blacon project, which is an outstanding community partnership between the local authority, the local community and the voluntary sector?

Mr. Horam: That is an interesting suggestion, which I shall consider.

Standards in Public Life

27. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what steps he is taking to implement the Nolan recommendations. [26059]

Mr. David Hunt: The Government welcome the broad thrust of the Nolan recommendations in so far as they affect the Government and we are now considering a detailed response.

Mr. MacShane: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the public concern that just four of the Conservative Members of Parliament chosen to serve on the proposed House of Commons Committee hold 23 paid directorships or consultancies between them? Is not that concern reflected in the Gallup opinion poll reported in *The Daily Telegraph* today, showing that nine out of 10 members of the public do not want Members of Parliament to take any outside payment of any sort?

As the Minister responsible for appointments to quangos, what will the right hon. Gentleman do now, before the Committee reports, to ensure that future quango appointments are not part of the Tory fund-raising operation?

Mr. Hunt: The Nolan report concluded that there was no substance to many of the allegations that have been thrown around. The hon. Gentleman should reflect on that. I hope that this House can now get on with setting up the relevant Committee to look into the way in which this House should respond to the Nolan recommendations.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is unsatisfactory for single organisations to write cheques for £4,000 apiece—cash for votes—for the election expenses of many of our political opponents? Does he further agree that it would make sense for Members of Parliament to judge their own conduct by what I call the local newspaper test—if they are doing something that they would not want reported in the local newspaper, either they should not do it or they should tell the local newspaper?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend raises some important points, which I hope Labour Members will consider carefully. I read some speculation somewhere that at a recent Labour party conference—which seemed to be an awful lot of something about nothing—Labour said that it was looking into its links with the trade unions. I hope that it does so and comes forward quickly with recommendations.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Given the huge public support for the Nolan recommendations—all the answers to all the questions showing eight or nine people out of 10 supporting them—does the right hon. Gentleman think that for the Government to propose for the implementing Committee a group of people who are not only not all senior Conservative Members of the House, but clearly have a vested interest in a result that will allow hon. Members to continue being sponsored from outside the House, exactly confirms the public prejudice that we are always trying to look after ourselves first and the public second?

Why did not the Government propose Members of Parliament with no outside interests, so that there could be a clearly impartial decision reflecting the view of the public that we need to sweep away the old order and bring in a far more free-from-interest order in accord with the public view of the day?

Mr. Hunt: The hon. Gentleman should read and reflect on the report in full. He would then realise that it states that many of the allegations that have been thrown around have been found to have no substance. It is a fundamental recommendation of the Nolan committee that Members of Parliament should be free to continue with outside interests. That was a specific recommendation. Of course the House must carefully consider the Nolan recommendations, but that is a matter for the House and not for me.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my right hon. Friend agree that it would be sensible to ask the Nolan committee to look into the corruption and malpractice in so many Labour-run local authorities—in particular, the incompetence in the social services department in Islington when it was run by a lady who has now escaped to the Labour Benches, the employment of illegal immigrants in Hackney, and the employment of a teacher in Lambeth even though he is a trade union leader?

Does my right hon. Friend agree that Labour Members will never be taken seriously until all of them give up every penny of trade union sponsorship both for themselves and for their constituency parties?

Mr. Hunt: My hon. Friend has issued an important challenge to Labour Members. I know that there is increasing concern about the way local government is being administered in certain parts of the country. My hon. Friend's voice will have been heard and the supportive reaction that he received noted. Indeed, the Nolan committee has already said that local government will be an area for further inquiry; no doubt my hon. Friend's remarks will be taken into account when it meets to consider taking further steps.

Mrs. Ann Taylor: In view of the comments made by the Chancellor's hon. Friends this afternoon, will he reconsider the Government's opposition to the proposal that the Nolan committee should look into party political funding? Would it not be helpful to everyone to have that inquiry brought forward and held as quickly as possible?

The Minister is directly responsible for appointments to quangos and he has said this afternoon that he fully supports Nolan's recommendations on that issue. He also made that clear in a debate six weeks ago. What steps has he taken to implement the Nolan committee's recommendations about appointments to quangos? What is he doing about those who hold office on quangos who were not appointed on merit? Will he give an assurance, in the spirit of Nolan, that Ministers have stopped packing quangos with Tory nominees?

Mr. Hunt: I wish that the hon. Lady would read the Nolan report, as it clearly labels as untrue each and every one of the allegations that she has just made. The report says that there is no evidence of such packing. There is no evidence that people are appointed on anything other than merit. It is about time she reflected on the recommendations and words of the Nolan report, rather than trying to invent allegations which cannot be proved. We have put forward our policies very clearly. We have already laid out our response to the recommendations in the debate in this House. We are now preparing our detailed response, which will be published as soon as possible.

Market Testing

28. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress the Government are making with their market-testing programme. [26060]

Mr. Horam: As our announcement in January on the "Competing for Quality" programme showed, progress has been very good. By September 1994, £2 billion of activities had been looked at and annual savings of more than £400 million identified. New figures will be available shortly.

Mr. Duncan: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that answer. Does it not contrast starkly with Labour party policy, which seems to be against such efficiency savings? Indeed, as a result, the Labour party seems to be in favour of inefficiency and therefore higher taxation. What savings does my hon. Friend estimate we are likely to make in the forthcoming year?

Mr. Horam: Until September, we are tackling a programme worth about £860 million. At the current rate of saving of about 20 per cent., that should yield—if my arithmetic is right—savings of about £170 million for the taxpayer.

Ms Walley: Will the Minister look at the way in which the issue is being raised in the health service? Will he look closely at the decision of an industrial tribunal in Birmingham today? The transfer of a particular contract from one part of the health service to another has been found to be unlawful in the European Court because of the rules on the transfer of undertakings. When will the Government recognise that the exercise does not take into account the long term but looks only at certain so-called efficiency savings without considering the total cost and the dismantling of organisations such as the national health service.

Mr. Horam: The programme does take account of the long term. Clearly, it is beginning to be a long-term factor. It started in the late 1980s and has carried on successfully over the years. If the hon. Lady would care to give me details of the specific example that she mentioned, I will certainly look into it.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is there any reason why in-house bids should not be acceptable, particularly, for example, in the running of pension funds?

Mr. Horam: It is normal practice to accept in-house bids. Only in very rare circumstances, where expertise is not available in-house, are in-house bids not accepted. I assure my hon. Friend of that.

Government Policy

29. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster to what extent his Government responsibilities include overseeing and co-ordinating the presentation of Government policy. [26061]

Mr. David Hunt: I chair the relevant Cabinet Committee.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is it true that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has sent minutes to the Prime Minister and sought to counsel him about the political and electoral consequences of the enormous rate of negative equity, especially in the south-east of England? In making those representations, has the Chancellor also drawn to the Prime Minister's attention the human cost of the anxiety suffered by millions of people enduring negative equity and the consequences for enterprise because people cannot borrow to start new businesses? What do the Government intend to do about the problems of negative equity to lift the burden from the people who suffer it?

Mr. Hunt: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary said earlier, the Government are responsible for a sustained period of non-inflationary growth and a background in economic statistics that we have not seen for many generations. Of course, we are aware of the difficulties faced by some individuals. My right hon.

Friends have announced a series of measures designed to counteract that. The Government's sound policies take precedence over presentation. After last weekend, it is clear that, for Labour, presentation comes first.

Dr. Spink: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that, in presenting Government policies, the Government seek to promote Britain in the best light and to promote pride in being British, rather than to sell Britain down the river as that lot over there on the Opposition Benches would, with minimum wages and the social chapter, which would destroy jobs?

Mr. Hunt: In the words of the deputy leader of the Labour party, any silly fool should know that that would be the consequence of the Labour party's policies, which my hon. Friend has just set out. Apparently, the Labour party last weekend decided to say anything about nothing and nothing about anything. The party without a leader is becoming the leader without a party.

Mr. McNamara: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. In his reply to the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman), the Parliamentary Secretary may have inadvertently misled the House when he said that in-house applications for tenders for services that were about to be privatised would normally be accepted. In fact, in many cases they are not even allowed to tender. In the case of the civil service pension scheme, which is of major importance, it appears that the President of the Board of Trade is not allowing any in-house tenders.

Points of Order

3.31 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, which is of some delicacy, Madam Speaker. On Tuesday 27 June, BBC Scotland and a programme called "Scottish Lobby" propose to have parliamentary awards. I do not know whether it is proper for the BBC to award Members of Parliament parliamentary awards according to criteria decided by the BBC. It is a matter of some concern when the Office of Speaker becomes involved. It is understood that you, Madam Speaker, are going to present the awards. I earnestly ask for reflection as to whether, with all the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons, your Office should be involved—perhaps without any sort of judgment by the Speaker—in awarding awards to parliamentarians on a pretty invidious basis. Whatever the basis, you have to be above such battles.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has written to me on more than one occasion about the matter. As with a number of issues that he pursues, the hon. Gentleman has pursued this one with me now for more than four weeks. I have taken sound advice from many of his colleagues, particularly from the hon. Member for Hamilton (Mr. Robertson), who leads for the Opposition on Scottish matters, as well as from many other colleagues. I am not adjudicating, but I consider it to be a privilege and honour simply to make the presentation to one or two of my colleagues on whichever side of the House they may sit.

Mrs. Helen Liddell (Monklands, East): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I rise in view of the developments over the weekend on trading in PowerGen shares. I am aware that the Financial Secretary made a statement to the House on Friday afternoon. In view of the growing seriousness of the issues raised, particularly in relation to the Treasury's role, has the Chancellor of the Exchequer approached you, Madam Speaker, to say that he is prepared to appear before the House to make a statement on those serious matters?

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Lady indicated, the Minister did not make a statement on Friday; I allowed a private notice question. I have not heard since that any Minister is seeking to make a statement.

Mr. Ray Powell (Ogmore): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Could we have a further investigation of Welsh questions? I appreciate that we have asked you to investigate that in the past, but after today, I think that it is necessary that the matter should be looked at again. I am complaining not for myself because I was fortunate enough to be called to ask a supplementary question, but because hon. Members who represent Welsh constituencies and who tabled questions failed to be called today.

Today, eight Labour Members were called, with four Conservative Members who do not represent Welsh constituencies and one Liberal Democrat who does not represent a Welsh constituency. Five hon. Members who do not represent Welsh constituencies were called compared with eight who do. That is out of 38 Welsh Members. We have the opportunity to ask questions only once a month and surely that right should be given to Welsh constituencies and Welsh Members.

I notice that that does not happen in Scottish questions, for some unknown reason. Therefore, I suggest that we look yet again at the matter. Perhaps the Government Whip who deals with Welsh matters could persuade his colleagues not to use up the time that Welsh Members should have to ask Welsh questions.

Madam Speaker: As the hon. Member appreciates, I deal with Welsh questions in the same way that I deal with Scottish questions. This is, of course, a United Kingdom Parliament and when hon. Members from any part of the House table questions, they will be called to put them and called for supplementaries if they should rise.

I have noticed today that we have not moved as quickly as we normally do with Welsh questions. To some extent, that is because we tend to get long questions and we get long answers, too. If they were much more brisk, we would make further progress and the hon. Gentleman would be much happier than he is at the present time, although I see him with his usual smile on his face.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I have no inside information about who will get the Scottish parliamentary awards but I have some suggestions. Would it not be preferable if you were to nominate one or two Scottish Members to give awards for the journalists in the Gallery? It would not be proper for those who do not manage to stay for Adjournment debates on Scottish sewage and other such matters to be considered in that respect. It would be much more fun for us to adjudicate for once on the qualities, persistence and abilities of those who spend so much of their time telling us what we ought to be doing.

Madam Speaker: I could agree to the hon. Member's suggestion only if those nominated worked 12 or 14-hour days in that Gallery and stayed to the very end.

BILL PRESENTED

Representation of the People (Amendment)

Mr. Jeff Rooker, supported by Mr. Harry Barnes, Sir Patrick Cormack, Mr. Don Foster, Sir David Knox, Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mr. Richard Shepherd, Mr. David Trimble, Mr. Keith Vaz, Mr. Mike Watson, Mr. Dafydd Wigley and Mr. George Walden, presented a Bill to amend the Representation of the People Acts 1983 and 1985 so as to prevent certain potential abuses of electoral registration, proxy voting and overseas electors' declarations; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 July and to be printed. [Bill 130.]

Northern Ireland

3.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I beg to move,

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 18th May, be approved.

It is just over a year since the House last considered whether to renew for a further year the principal provisions in the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. It was a wise measure to provide for the renewal of these temporary provisions every year if they are to survive.

I will, for the only time today, indulge in a quotation from what I said in last year's debate—it is a short one:

"The Act needs to achieve a balance between safeguarding the rights of the individual and providing condign measures against terrorists and the organisations that sustain them."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1994; Vol. 244, c. 267.]

I think it right to acknowledge at the beginning that exceptional measures of this kind, enacted in the first place in order to meet exceptional threats to life and liberty, tend to develop an adhesive quality of their own—that is to say, they are more likely to stick than to be dropped as time goes by. It is easier to react to a sudden crisis by imposing such measures than it is to acquire sufficient confidence to surrender them in response to an improvement in the scene. Members of Parliament and Ministers in particular need to remind themselves of that truth. Circumstances do change and, happily, in Northern Ireland they have, in the past 12 months, changed dramatically for the better, as I shall illustrate. So it behoves us all, I suggest, to examine carefully whether, in the new circumstances, the former balance needs adjusting or whether it still needs to be maintained.

I want it to be known in the House and outside that, in proposing the renewal of these provisions for a further year, I accept that the burden of proof rests with me. It is right to speak and to think of "the new circumstances" rather than of "today's circumstances". There is a danger, if we think only of what things are like today, that we may not give sufficient thought for what, on the basis of such objective evidence as is available, they foreseeably might be like tomorrow and what they foreseeably might be like next month. No one can be sure what will happen, of course; we can only go by outward and visible signs of other people's true intentions and then try to interpret them sensibly. In other words, like insurers, we have to assess the risks for the people for whom we are responsible. That is a concept and a duty to which I shall return.

What are the new circumstances? They are as dramatic as they are welcome—and overdue. More than nine months have now gone by since what has come to be known as the republican ceasefire and nearly eight months since its loyalist counterpart. Many factors have, doubtless, contributed to the ceasefires. Foremost among them, to which the whole House will wish to pay tribute, are the extraordinary courage and steadfastness of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the other security forces, and the staunchness of the people of Northern Ireland as a whole.

We should remind ourselves, however, of the hideous terrorist crimes committed in 1994 alone, before the ceasefires occurred. For if present circumstances suggest that a reversion to violence is being retained as an option, those are the kind of crimes that may again be perpetrated. Those are the crimes from which it is our duty to protect the public, as best we may. From January to June 1994, republican groups murdered 17 people and loyalists 27. I shall cite just three instances, each horrific and each leaving a trail of bereavement and pain.

On 13 May last year, the Provisional IRA murdered a civilian cleaner in his car as he was driving with his family in Lurgan. His three-year-old daughter, Emma, was blown out of the car and severely injured. On 18 June, loyalist gunmen walked into a bar in Loughinisland where people were watching the World cup on television. They sprayed automatic gunfire into the crowd, murdering six people including an 87-year-old man. In August, Mr. Telford Withers, a part-time Ulster Defence Regiment soldier, was murdered in his shop at Crossgar by a gunman. None of those crimes, nor any of similar character that preceded them, never mind by whom they were committed, should ever be forgotten.

Foremost among the new circumstances, however, is the fact that, since the ceasefires, terrorist activity has markedly diminished. People throughout the Province are relishing a return to what the rest of us have always called normality, yet which so very many of them have never experienced in their lives. Yet I cannot say that there has been no major terrorist atrocity since then; there has been. In November last year, Mr. Frank Kerr, a postal worker in Newry, was attacked and brutally shot dead in an armed robbery. He was fighting to prevent the theft of public money. That crime was planned and executed by the Provisional IRA organisation in South Armagh. Some £130,000 was stolen, and although central authority within the Provisional IRA denied authorising the raid—and implied disapproval of it—none of the money has been returned.

Since the ceasefires, in Enniskillen, Newry and—most recently—Belfast, a total of four viable explosive devices have been found, fortunately before they could go off. Had they done so, the toll in life, limb and property could have been terrible. In no way should the Government or the House distinguish between such crimes according to whether republicans or so-called loyalists commit them. It matters not to the victim, and we have to judge how best to protect potential victims in future by means of legislation.

It remains the case that paramilitaries on both sides, and not only the principal organisations, are still engaging in terrorist-related activity. Let us look at some examples. Both sides seek money, and they go after it by robbery, by extortion with intimidation and by the criminal extraction of money from charities, clubs and ostensibly legitimate businesses. They are involved increasingly in the drug trafficking that makes the lives of so many young people wretched. For no less political motives, they are engaged in other criminally violent activities, too. In particular, they continue to seek to impose their will on communities by threats, intimidation and brutal beatings. Indeed, from 31 August until the end of May, there were 131 horrific so-called punishment attacks. Sixty-two of them have been attributed to loyalists, including 13 shootings before the loyalist ceasefire. Sixty-nine have been attributed to republicans.

Threats and intimidation often accompany those attacks. The thugs who perpetrate those sickening crimes often use baseball bats, clubs and cudgels with protruding

nails to beat their victims' limbs and torsos, smashing their bones and wrecking their internal organs. The attacks are capped with threats of death if the victims tell the RUC. Additionally, people are forced to leave their homes and neighbourhoods on pain of death by shooting. Others are ordered to remain away. Some voluntary groups fear that the number of people excluded from their homes by those wicked means may run into hundreds.

Neither ought we to forget that there remain other organisations—equally deadly—which do not subscribe to the ceasefires. The INLA, which has carried out some of the most appalling atrocities of the past 25 years, has not mounted any attacks since the ceasefires commenced but has not yet declared a ceasefire of its own. The threat that the INLA poses was aptly demonstrated on 4 April, when the Gardai intercepted a van and a car north of Dublin containing four suspected senior INLA members, and recovered six automatic rifles, 20 pistols and more than 2,500 rounds of ammunition. That the arms were destined for Northern Ireland is beyond doubt. We can only speculate on whether and where they were to be used.

The INLA is not the only such group. Republican Sinn Fein has vowed to oppose the Provisional IRA ceasefire and to mount attacks in Northern Ireland. The threat that it poses is taken very seriously indeed, both by the RUC and by the Gardai. Only last month, the Gardai arrested six men and a woman following the discovery of arms in Dublin. All seven are suspected to have connections with Republican Sinn Fein, and have since been charged with firearms offences.

Consistent with all that terrorist activity, terrorist organisations on both sides continue to train teams for operations, to research improvised weapons, to identify potential targets and—crucially—to maintain undiminished their stock of weapons and explosives.

I take no perverse—or any—pleasure in telling the House about all this. Sometimes Ministers are upbraided for going on about it and spoiling the party. "Move the peace process forward," we are told. The implication is that we should ignore it all, or view it indulgently. To contrast it with the professed assurance that peace has come for good is said to be unhelpful. But what is really needed to move the peace process forward is the ending of actions that rupture or menace the peace. Otherwise, how are those who question the compatibility of those activities with professions of peace to be reassured? More immediately, how are we in the House to be reassured, who have to assess the risk to the lives of those for whom we in this United Kingdom Parliament are responsible?

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I believe that the peace process should be advanced, and the Secretary of State will no doubt accept that we all deplore the crimes to which he has referred. Violence and thuggery can never be justified under any circumstances.

Will the Secretary of State concede that the organisation that was established in 1970 with the sole aim of driving Northern Ireland out of the United Kingdom through force of every kind, including violence and the terrible atrocities that were committed mainly in Northern Ireland but also in places such as Birmingham, simply did not succeed? It was the will of the House and of the country as a whole that that violence should not be victorious. Therefore, when the IRA announced in August-September last year the end of its campaign of violence, it was a victory against terrorism.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The IRA certainly did not succeed and it has not advanced very much in 25 years. However, I am afraid that many thousands of people in Northern Ireland and elsewhere look at the maintenance of weapons and explosives and see that as incompatible with the profession that peace is here for good. They hope that peace is here for good and they take note of what the hon. Gentleman and others have said, but they also take note of the activities that I itemised a few minutes ago.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I was a very close friend of Mr. Frank Kerr and I do not like Mr. Kerr's death being used as part of a political argument. Will the Secretary of State confirm that the peace process to which he refers is one that he himself has helped to advance by removing exclusion orders as they applied to people coming into England, Scotland and Wales; that he himself has helped to advance by ordering the opening of border roads; that he himself has helped to advance by meeting with the leader of Sinn Fein; and that he himself has helped to advance through the Minister of State's entering into formal party discussions with the leader of Provisional Sinn Fein and those who represent the loyalist paramilitary groupings?

One of the problems that some of us have is: how can one be half in and half out of a peace process? Will the Secretary of State take the opportunity today to explain to those who have that difficulty how one can be half in and half out of a process that the Secretary of State has, to his credit, helped to sustain?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I can give very readily to the hon. Gentleman, who has a most worthy record in those matters, the justification that he seeks. Those matters with which he began his list resulted from the advice of the Chief Constable, my principal security adviser, that it was now possible to open the border roads and to lift exclusion orders in the light of a diminution in the threat. The same goes for a whole raft of other measures that have been taken and with which my right hon. Friend the Minister of State is very willing to deal if need be at a later stage.

However, it is a very different matter if I am then asked to enter into negotiations with a party that is associated with a paramilitary organisation which is retaining its hold upon its armaments and which has used them in the past to sustain its party's political objective.

Mr. Mallon *rose—*

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman again, but I know that many hon. Members wish to speak in the debate.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the Secretary of State for giving way again. As an eminent lawyer, he must realise that today he is about to renew legislation that will effect the closure of border roads at the same time as he has given instructions for the opening of border roads. Does he accept the wider point that, at the same time as renewing the legislation, the Secretary of State and the Minister of State are affecting us in many ways by operating as Saatchi and Saatchi for the Provisional Sinn Fein? Since peace has been called, they have kept those people on the front pages of every newspaper and in the lead stories of

[Mr. Mallon]

every news bulletin for up to nine months. Will he explain to those of us who have fought against the operations of the IRA and loyalist paramilitary groupings for more than 30 years, how that can be equated with his refusal not to renew the legislation?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: If I am allowed to continue, I shall explain to the hon. Gentleman and the House the need, as insurance, to retain the provisions. We have not formed that judgment alone and unaided, but with the benefit of the advice of an independent reviewer of the operation of the Act over the past year, Mr. John Rowe QC. Had I and the Government agreed to enter into negotiations with Sinn Fein, as we are happy to do with other parties—including the hon. Gentleman's party—which have never been tarnished with any association with paramilitary violence, that would have left his party in a dangerous position, as Sinn Fein would have been able to say, with the support of the Provisional IRA, that tactics such as they have employed actually secured political advance. That would have left the hon. Gentleman's party, which has always subjected itself to the discipline of constitutional politics, in a dangerous position and a most undeserved one.

Mr. Mallon *rose—*

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I must continue.

I should like to outline the principal ways in which, in the past four years, the Act has delivered the greater part of Parliament's legislative response to the terrorist threat from both sides, and to view those provisions in the light of the new circumstances.

Part I of the Act creates the so-called scheduled offences, which are offences commonly committed by terrorists, requiring special treatment as regards bail, remands, trial, evidence, sentence and the remission of sentence. They are tried by judge alone in the so-called Diplock courts.

Part II makes special provision for powers to stop, to arrest, to search and to seize property. Part III creates special offences against public security and order, including directing terrorist offences and belonging to such an organisation. Part IV provides for detention by order, otherwise known as detention. That power is currently suspended.

Part VI makes special provision in respect of persons in police custody under the terrorism provisions for their management and their questioning in holding centres such as Castlereagh.

Part VII makes special provision for the confiscation of proceeds of terrorist activities and for specially authorised investigators.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the Minister give way?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I shall continue with my speech a little longer, if I may.

I do not propose to rehearse today the details of the provisions. They are well described in the latest report of the independent reviewer, Mr. Rowe, presented in May this year.

The Act represents a wide spectrum of special provisions, and it is right that its operation from year to year should be independently reviewed. In addition to Mr. Rowe's report, the House has the report of Sir Louis Blom-Cooper QC, whom I appointed two years ago as an independent commissioner to review the operation of the holding centres. I am grateful to each of those distinguished gentlemen and to the deputy commissioner for the holding centres, Dr. Bill Norris, for their work. Dr. Norris has made over 80 unannounced visits to the holding centres.

Mr. Rowe, after wide consultation and dispassionate assessment of the evidence, concludes that it is necessary to renew each section of the Act currently in force for a further year. His judgment concurs with our own. We consider that the continuing terrorist-related activity that I mentioned leaves us no prudent alternative, although the special powers that the Act provides are being used less and less, I am glad to say. The latent threat remains, and in our judgment, the Act itself remains necessary for the time being.

Mr. Rowe recommends, however, that during the coming year the Act should be kept under review with a view to using the powers in section 69 to suspend individual provisions. We are happy to accept that wholeheartedly.

Mr. James Molyneaux (Lagan Valley): Appendix A on page 61 of the Rowe report gives the list of persons and organisations who gave assistance in discussion and representation. One is the Anglo-Irish Secretariat. As the Secretary of State knows—although this was not his doing—the secretariat was designed to be a joint instrument of the two Governments. Can the right hon. and learned Gentleman explain the basis on which the secretariat gave oral and written evidence and what it conveyed?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: That is a good question to ask Mr. Rowe, but I do not know the answer at the moment.

When, on advice, I consider that a particular provision is no longer necessary, I shall not hesitate to invite the House to approve an order suspending it. The suspension could be reversed at any time if necessary. After all, it is the Government's aim to remove those provisions altogether in due course—but Mr. Rowe concludes, and we agree, that we have not reached that time yet.

Mr. Corbyn: As the Secretary of State is clearly determined to have the order approved today, will he give the House an idea of when he will suspend the section relating to Diplock courts and restore the right of trial by jury, which would be seen as a major contribution to the peace process?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The answer is: as soon as I am advised that intimidation has diminished to such a degree that it will be safe once again in the North—it remains unsafe in the Republic—to entrust such cases to a jury that will no longer fear intimidation. The original Diplock report dealt with that matter in great thoroughness.

Sir Louis Blom-Cooper and Mr. Rowe have again advocated the introduction of some kind of electronic recording of interviews with suspects held under the prevention of terrorism Act. In the past, I had to balance the strong arguments in favour of recording against the advice of the Chief Constable of the RUC that to introduce any form of electronic recording for terrorism suspects would not be in the overall interests of justice.

The change to the security situation clearly has a bearing on where the balance of advantage now lies. It introduces other factors, too. The number of suspects being questioned about offences connected with terrorism has, since the ceasefire, reduced by some two thirds. Assuming that the continued absence of violence will allow the downward trend to continue, there will, I hope, come a time when the need to use the more rigorous regime afforded by the holding centres will disappear entirely. That will mean that the ordinary Police and Criminal Evidence (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 procedures will suffice for all suspects. That must be our aim, although we are not there yet.

Having consulted the Chief Constable, however, I can say that, if it still appears necessary to do so at all in the light of the developing security situation, the Government will propose introducing an electronic recording scheme. That will be in the Bill that will be required next Session to replace the present Act. Such a scheme will require statutory provision, because it remains important for arrangements to be in place to prevent tapes from being disclosed by those who might have sinister motives. The House would, of course, have ample opportunity to consider the detail during that Bill's passage.

With the decline in terrorist activity, the use of the holding centres has also diminished. It is my hope that that will continue, although the police will continue vigorously to investigate earlier terrorist crimes, no matter how old—but we are always determined to demonstrate that suspects, who may have been involved in the most horrific of crimes, can have no legitimate fears about ill-treatment. We have in place codes of practice, and since the previous debate it has been agreed that Sir Louis will be able to sit in on the interviews. That should provide another reassurance and safeguard.

Sir Louis once again touches on the material conditions of detention in the holding centres. He continues to believe that the facilities at Castlereagh should not remain in commission any longer than absolutely necessary. I am content with that. However, I believe that it is sensible in the current changing security situation for the Police Authority for Northern Ireland to pause and review its overall police building programme. It accepts the need to improve standards of accommodation, as does the RUC. The important question of a replacement for Castlereagh will therefore remain under consideration. Sir Louis makes other recommendations, with which the Minister of State will be able to deal should that be necessary later.

The context of conditions in which persons are held in custody permits me to announce, in respect of convicted prisoners, the enhancement in three respects of a compassionate leave scheme established in Northern Ireland for many years. It has enabled prisoners to maintain family contacts at times of acute domestic difficulty. The arrangements have been of particular importance to a prisoner population the majority of whom serve long sentences.

Over the years, the conditions attaching to those arrangements have been strictly adhered to by prisoners to an impressive degree—including prisoners convicted of the most serious offences—and that has contributed to a wide understanding of and support for the measures among community leaders and the general public in Northern Ireland. All such schemes, however, are capable of improvement, and in its 1995-96 business plan, the Prison Service declared its intention to develop further opportunities for prisoners to maintain close family ties. A lot of changes to those arrangements have been working successfully now for almost a year and I consider that the time is now right to make further improvements, which I believe will receive widespread support in the community in Northern Ireland.

Accordingly, and with immediate effect, I intend to take three steps. First, the maximum period of compassionate leave that the Prison Service may authorise for attendance at the funeral of a parent, child, brother, sister, grandparent or grandchild is currently 24 hours. In future, the Prison Service will be authorised to permit a period of absence of up to 48 hours, subject to a satisfactory assessment of risk. That will not of course apply automatically in every case. The length of absence will depend on individual circumstances.

Secondly, prisoners may apply for compassionate leave in the event of the serious illness of a parent, child, brother or sister. That may be granted if the Prison Service is satisfied as to the circumstances and the degree of risk. In future, that arrangement will extend to the serious illness of grandparents and grandchildren. It will be for the prisoner or his family to satisfy the Prison Service as to the nature and extent of the illness.

Lastly, prisoners who have served at least 10 years and who have a close relative who has been unable through medical disability to visit the prison for at least 18 months, may currently apply for a short period of compassionate leave. Two such periods may be granted in any one year provided the prisoner presents no undue risk to public safety. The value of that facility has declined with the availability of other forms of leave to prisoners who have served 11 years or more. Yet the scheme has worked well and prisoners have shown willingness to honour its conditions.

Accordingly, I intend to reduce the qualifying length of sentence from 10 years to six years. Those three changes are modest but none the less useful extensions of arrangements that had been working well for prisoners, their families and the public.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): While we are on the subject of prisoners, not least in the light of much media speculation over the past weekend, will my right hon. and learned Friend comment on the situation with regard to Private Clegg?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and with the House's permission I shall do so very briefly.

There is no question of any linkage between the case of Private Clegg and any consideration of possible changes to remission rates or other regime changes for prisoners in Northern Ireland or anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Those are matters solely for the British Government to decide. The Life Sentence Review Board met to consider Private Clegg's case, along with several others, on 6 June. I am considering its recommendations, and I shall consult the Lord Chief Justice and the trial judge as necessary.

That is the standard procedure, quasi-judicial in character, which is followed in all life sentence cases. As the law requires, Private Clegg's case will be treated in accordance with that established practice, solely on its

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

merits. There is no question of one law for the security forces and another for the rest, as Private Clegg's prosecution and conviction plainly demonstrated.

Mr. Gerry Sutcliffe (Bradford, South): I am grateful for the Secretary of State's written responses to questions that I have asked him in the past. As the case has been raised today, can he say when he is likely to make his decision on the recommendation that he says has been sent to him? I ask because of the anguish that Private Clegg and his family are undergoing.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman has most assiduously represented the concerns of his constituent. I am not able to give the information that he seeks. As I have said, I shall have to consult. I shall do so with all practical speed.

Mr. Julian Brazier (Canterbury): All of us on the Government Benches welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's robust statement that there is to be no linkage, but will he reassure us none the less that, when it comes to Private Clegg himself, there can be no question of the consultations involving questions being asked about the impact on certain parts of the community of justice being done for this unfortunate soldier?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I hope that that is implicit in what I have said. If it is not, it should be explicit. Those matters will be dealt with not by reference to political expediency, but by reference to the merits of each individual case.

The ceasefires have met with a ready response by the Government. On advice from the Chief Constable, many important relaxations have been made in security measures. Those have already been mentioned in part by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon).

Dr. Joe Hendron (Belfast, West): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I must now conclude my speech. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State will deal with further matters if that is required. I shall not detain the House further now.

I hope that the trend of relaxation can continue, as it will if we are advised that the terrorist threat continues to diminish. I know that that advice will be positive. It will be measured as the gravity of our responsibilities demands.

In the second half of the year, we shall have to make decisions about the legislation that will be necessary to replace the current Act when it expires completely next year. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, there will have

"to be a wide-ranging look at all the options"

for permanent counter-terrorism organisation once a lasting peace is established in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Mallon: On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I ask for your advice. The Secretary of State was good enough to give way to three interventions about the Private Clegg affair. He turned down an intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), who represented a person who was killed, as was proven in three courts, by Private Clegg. In the circumstances, do you not feel, Madam Speaker, that the Secretary of State should reconsider his decision not to give way to my hon. Friend?

Madam Speaker *rose—*

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I need not trouble you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Courteous as always. Thank you very much.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I give way to the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron).

Dr. Hendron: Does the Secretary of State accept that my constituents and perhaps those of Greater Belfast have been deeply offended, but not so much by the campaign to free Lee Clegg? There are, of course, many campaigns to release prisoners. Instead, they have been offended by the nature of the campaign, involving former brigadiers and colonels and senior politicians. At virtually no time have those people considered in detail what happened on the night when Karen Reilly and Martin Peake were killed.

Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that I recognise that Lee Clegg did not set out to kill someone? But is it not a fact that the Government do not want any other charge save murder—for example, culpable homicide—to be on the statute book in case other soldiers might also find themselves behind bars? I speak as someone who has given a lifetime to opposing paramilitaries on both sides. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the nature of the Clegg campaign is deeply offensive? When he makes his decision, will he assure us that it will not be made on the basis of a campaign that has been joined by people who have never considered the detail of what happened on that fateful night?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman speaks eloquently for his constituents. There is nobody better to do that than him. What he has said about the Government's intentions is not consistent with my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary having set up an inquiry into the law of murder. I understand that those conducting the inquiry will report within a month or two. I think that I can reject what the hon. Gentleman has said about our intentions. I do not want to say anything more about the circumstances of the Clegg case. It has been litigated in three courts up to the House of Lords and the judgments speak for themselves.

As I said, my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said in the House that there would have to be

"a wide-ranging look at all the options"—[*Official Report*, 8 March 1995; Vol. 256, c. 356.]

for permanent counter-terrorism legislation once a lasting peace is established. I can now confirm that the exercise will include a powerful, authoritative and, most importantly, an independent review of the continuing need for the order and the prevention of terrorism Act.

It is a matter for judgment when the conditions would be right to start such a process. Confidence in a lasting peace has still to be established. It is likely—and I regret this—that such a review could not sensibly be mounted in time for its conclusions to influence the successor Act. If that does prove to be the case, I undertake that next Session's Bill, some of the provisions of which may from

the outset be suspended, will be explicitly temporary and will have a shorter maximum lifespan than the five years of the present Act.

I profoundly hope that the time will soon come when the emergency legislation will have finally served its purpose, as I anticipated in December 1992, in a speech that I made in Coleraine. I hold to all that I said there, in a speech that was quite widely noticed. Much has been achieved, far more than a year ago seemed attainable so soon. Today, I acknowledge the contributions of all who have brought that about.

The exploratory dialogue that we are conducting with Sinn Fein and the two loyalist parties offers a means of leading to the achievement of much more, but a terrorist threat, regrettably, still remains. The Government are not going to drop their guard prematurely. There is too much at stake for that. Therefore, I commend the order to the House.

4.16 pm

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): I begin by saying that the Labour party concurs with a great deal of the analysis of the present situation that the Secretary of State has just presented. Our interpretation and judgment, however, leads us to slightly different conclusions about the future of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1989.

I welcome the steps that the Secretary of State has taken so far in response to the improvements in the security situation in Northern Ireland. In a sense, he underplayed his hand this afternoon in terms of the number of changes that he has felt able to introduce, and the dramatic improvements in security. I shall not bother the House with listing them, but he did himself a disservice by not acknowledging the steps that he has taken.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge our agreement on the announcement that the Secretary of State made this afternoon about changes in compassionate leave for prisoners, as that is a step that we welcome very much. I was hoping to welcome with great gusto the announcement that there would be electronic recording at the holding centre in Castlereagh. I am disappointed that the right hon. and learned Gentleman was able to say only that that will be put in train in the next Session. He also said that he would be looking at section 69 of the Act, to change certain powers that are already in the EPA. I am sad that electronic recordings will not be in place during the summer, when and if the holding centres are used, because they would make a difference immediately. We would have welcomed a more speedy implementation of the possible use of electronic recordings at the Castlereagh holding centre.

I shall not repeat the history that the Secretary of State went through in terms of the violence and the changes that we have seen from nine months ago, but with respect to the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), I want to acknowledge—not in a political way—the death of Mr. Frank Kerr, a postal worker in Armagh, because his is the main death since the peace process was introduced. It is incumbent on us to put on record, for his family, our feelings of sorrow, which his family will have felt.

I would like to reinforce the point that was made about the appalling punishment beatings and attacks that have continued. There have been 131 since last September, and, as has been outlined, they are the result of activities by all sets of paramilitaries.

It is important that we remember the exact nature of those attacks, because 16-year-old Malakey Clarke cited his punishment beating in his subsequent suicide note. We should not forget Michelle Kinkead, who was driven out of Northern Ireland after her husband was killed.

We must also think of the families who are still waiting to know what happened to the bodies of loved ones who have disappeared over the years. They have not been mentioned so far. Margaret McKiney, whom I saw in Belfast last week, was still waiting for news of her son Brian, who disappeared many years ago at the age of 22. It would give her great peace of mind if she could at least bury him now: that would make a difference to her, and the same applies to many other parents, families and friends whose loved ones are still missing.

Let me emphasise that, if advances are to be made, the punishment beatings must stop. There is no justification, in a democratic, civilised society, for taking the law into one's own hands. Sixty people were killed last year, and 84 the year before that; but remarkable progress is now being made. We congratulate members of both Governments and, in particular, the communities in Northern Ireland who have shown such determination and courage in taking the peace process forward.

I also pay tribute to the Army and the police, who are adapting to the new circumstances. It is not always realised that everyone must adapt to change. We should not forget, however, that more than 297 members of the security forces have been killed and 7,000 injured. Is there any way in which the Government can introduce greater flexibility to the system of assessing compensation for members of the security forces who are injured by terrorist violence, especially when off duty? The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble) raised that point in an Adjournment debate last week, and I think that the House would welcome such a change.

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): Is the hon. Lady prepared to include victims of the Chinook disaster in what she has said, given the Government's abominable announcement that some of the widows will not even receive a year and a half's worth of their husbands' pay in compensation?

Ms Mowlam: I agree with the hon. Gentleman in principle, having read in the newspapers about the levels of compensation that have been offered. I am reticent, not about the principle, but only because I do not always believe everything that I read in the newspapers. As I have not been given a detailed report of exactly what those families are receiving, I cannot give the hon. Gentleman a carte blanche guarantee. No one who has read the reports concerning some of the wives of folk who were in the Chinook could help agreeing with him, but we shall wait to hear what the Minister says when he replies to the debate.

Before the announcements of the ceasefires in August and October last year—there was no doubt of the progress towards a stable peace settlement, and Opposition Members welcomed that—we had always registered our opposition to the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 during debates in the House. Over the years, many hon. Members on both sides of the House have referred to the unfortunate ritual nature of the renewal debates.

[Ms Mowlam]

Our reasons for opposing the EPA in recent years have been stated clearly and concisely, more often than not by my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara). Along with others, he has argued that section 34—the internment provision—gives the state, or the Executive, an unacceptable power to imprison without either charge or trial, and that the Government have ignored proposals from their own advisers for reforms in regard to such matters as access to legal advice for those in holding centres and the procedure for certifying in rather than out in the case of scheduled offences.

Our opposition has been based on the fact that numerous sections of the Act have upset the delicate balance between fighting terrorism and protecting basic civil rights. We have questioned whether in principle it works and whether the curtailment of civil rights, and the anger and suspicion that it has created for many innocent families, have been outweighed by its success as part of the fight against terrorism.

Not only Opposition Members have asked those questions. The Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Sir E. Heath), expressed worry in the debate in 1993, when he pointed out that the objectives of defeating terrorism

"are the same objectives as Governments of all parties have had . . . But the plain fact is that, despite the lengthy passage of time, the objectives have not been achieved; nor is there any sign whatever of their being achieved."—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1993; Vol. 226, c. 168-69.]

The Secretary of State took note of those arguments and, during the debate in 1994, acknowledged exactly the argument that I am making. He acknowledged the

"need to maintain the essential fairness of the law recognising, among other considerations, that unfair law, perceived to be oppressive, does not gain public acceptance and soon becomes law that works against its purpose."—[*Official Report*, 24 May 1994; Vol. 244, c. 263.]

The situation in Northern Ireland has changed and, one hopes, will continue to change. We believe that that necessitates us looking afresh at such legislation as the EPA.

The Secretary of State acknowledged this afternoon that in Coleraine in 1992 he stated:

"In the event of a genuine and established cessation of violence, the whole range of responses that we have had to make to that violence could, and would, inevitably be looked at afresh . . . Similarly, the emergency legislation on which many of these responses are founded would have served its purpose. Normality could return."

The Secretary of State quoted to us this afternoon J. J. Rowe, whose independent review of the EPA he quoted to support the position that he has adopted. One must draw attention to the fact that it was published in February 1994, so does not take into account the totality of what we have experienced in the past nine months. J. J. Rowe himself said in his report:

"His recommendations do not, therefore, take full account of the new situation which these events created, nor of the Government's working assumption that the ceasefires are intended to be permanent".

Our opposition to the EPA historically could have been more fully expressed if we had been able to amend the order. It has always been a question of renewal or abandonment; as a result, we have opposed. If we could have a reasoned amendment selected to abandon or suspend parts of the Bill, keep others, strengthen yet others, I believe that we would do so. That option has not been open to us.

For example, colleagues in my position in previous years have said that they wanted to keep parts of the EPA on the statute book, especially those sections, such as section 28 in conjunction with schedule 2, that proscribe certain organisations, and those sections, such as sections 53 and 54 and section 57 and schedule 5, which provide additional powers to combat racketeering and fraud associated with terrorism. We have always argued in favour of those in relation to the EPA, and have been in the difficult and problematic position that we had to accept the whole thing or abandon it.

Mr. Andrew Robathan (Blaby): I am relatively new to the House and I may be naive, but I understood that the reason why the Labour party opposed the EPA was that large numbers of hon. Members on the Benches behind the hon. Lady refused to support the Labour party when it asked them either to abstain or to vote with the Government on the EPA in the early 1980s. Is that not the case?

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): Naive.

Ms Mowlam: "Naive," say my colleagues behind me.

Mr. Robathan: Better to be naive than dishonest.

Ms Mowlam: No; I am being very honest with the hon. Gentleman. I am saying directly to him that there has been an argument from the Opposition Benches because we have been confronted with a difficult position. Some Opposition Members are, and have been, opposed in principle because they consider that the EPA is a violation of civil rights, that the balance has been turned over and that innocent families are affected.

Dr. Godman: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Ms Mowlam: May I just finish? Is that all right?

In that sense, some people have been opposed in principle and others have said, whether about proscription or about fraud and racketeering, that they would like to retain certain provisions in the Bill. Because of the way in which legislation is introduced—every year on the renewal one can either vote for or against—contradictions have been pointed out, not just from the Labour Benches but from the Liberal Democrat Benches. We have discussed the matter in the party, being the democratic party that we are, and on balance have adopted our present position. That is a clear and honest answer to the hon. Gentleman.

Dr. Godman: I apologise to my hon. Friend for being over-eager in intervening. Surely the implementation of a measure such as this should not encourage police officers to act in a rough-handed way at our airports when dealing with bona fide travellers from Northern Ireland? Not so very long ago at Glasgow airport, a group of Northern Ireland political party representatives were treated in a grossly discourteous manner when on their way to attend a conference in Glasgow. Among their number were a

certain Mr. Ian Paisley junior, Councillor McGimpsey, Brendan Mackie and David Ervine. They were treated in a disgraceful way by police officers at Glasgow airport.

Ms Mowlam: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention. It is a good example of the point that I was trying to make, which was that the difficulty is that families or individuals who have not in any way been directly connected to terrorism have been faced with harassment at ports. It causes a great deal of anger in the Irish community, both in England and across the water, among families who are innocent and whose lives have been affected by the EPA. That is one of the difficult balancing acts that we have always had to take into account.

Having explained in detail to the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) about the position with which we have been faced historically—

Mr. Robathan: That is difficult.

Ms Mowlam: It is not difficult. I can do it with no problems. I appreciate his sympathy but let me reassure him that it is not difficult for me. I should like now, however, clearly to acknowledge that the position has changed in the way that the Secretary of State has analysed. Our judgment on that change, however, is that a response is now possible that is more in tune with the present changing situation in Northern Ireland. Let me just give a couple of examples of how things could be responded to differently.

The Secretary of State mentioned using powers under section 69 of the Act to introduce orders to suspend—to put in reserve—different parts of the EPA which are already covered by existing criminal law. In particular, section 17 of the Act, which applies to arrest powers for scheduled offences, could now be put in reserve for the simple reason that, if so needs be, it can be reintroduced, as the Secretary of State announced, over 24 hours. There are powers under existing legislation—the Northern Ireland provisions in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984—to address the powers given in section 17. That would be a positive aspect to returning to normality which would not destabilise the picture that the Secretary of State painted.

In other areas where changes cannot be made with immediate effect, we would like changes to be set in progress now. Let me give just one example. The Diplock courts were mentioned earlier. We clearly recognise the difficulties in making the transition to full-jury trials, especially while the intimidation, punishment beatings and attacks continue, but we want the transition from Diplock to a jury system to operate in parallel with effective protection measures for jurors and witnesses. An immediate and important step that would signal a commitment to change would be to move to certifying in rather than certifying out of scheduled offences.

We recognise that the use of holding centres is now limited, but it would be helpful if, as the Secretary of State mentioned, Sir Louis Blom-Cooper were able to go in on particular interviews. The establishment of an independent legal unit at the holding centres would be an important step in ensuring that everything there functioned according to the rule of law.

In his speech, the Secretary of State said that he might in the months ahead operate certain powers and schedules in the Act, such as those that I have mentioned, by using schedule 69. I obviously welcome that, but it is sad that we cannot have such an announcement this afternoon in the House—an open, democratic debating forum—rather than action being taken by the Secretary of State in the months ahead. One or two steps could have been taken that would have made a difference.

Mr. Hunter: I was reflecting on the hon. Lady's statements about the phased reintroduction of jury trials, but is not the reality the on-going intimidation of witnesses? Does she not acknowledge that we are still a long way from being sure that jurors would not also be intimidated?

Ms Mowlam: I accept that intimidation of witnesses and jurors is a problem and that there is some difficulty with cases going through the courts while intimidation beatings and attacks are happening. However, we have to deal with that problem. My suggestion is that, if protection measures for jurors and witnesses are put in place in the months ahead, we could make a start on dismantling the Diplock system and extending jury trials into areas where historically they have not been available.

In the short term, like certifying in and certifying out of scheduled offences, it is a move in the right direction. I am not suggesting a great leap into the unknown, but rather starting a course of action so that in a year's time the House does not say, "Thank goodness there has been a cessation of violence for two years, but we have not put anything in place to reflect that." We want to move things along so that, if and when the cessation of violence has lasted long enough and the punishment beatings have stopped, we can begin to take a more open approach. It is both rational and common sense to begin to put something in place.

I want to set in train a fundamental and independent review of anti-terrorist legislation, responding to the changing nature of terrorism throughout the world. I want it to dovetail with proposals from Europe and the United States so that by 1996, when the EPA falls and the PTA is due to be renewed, a new Bill can be put before the House—one that is not emergency legislation specific to Northern Ireland, but rather a response to the challenge of the changing nature of terrorism.

That is a very different proposal from the one that the Secretary of State announced at the end of his speech, which I understood to be an independent review of the likely position when the EPA and the PTA come to an end. I agree that the review must be carried out in a transitional way, but I cannot understand why it cannot begin now so that in a year's time we do not have to ask, "Should the EPA continue?" It is emergency legislation which, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman suggested in his opening remarks, has an adhesive quality. Why do we have to wait another year, not for change in response to what is happening in the real world, but just to start the preparation for the independent review?

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I congratulate the hon. Lady on the civilised way in which she is dealing with this matter. She referred to perception. I assume from what she said that the Labour party will again vote against the renewal of the order. Does she feel that in some quarters there is a perception that, in the peace process, Sinn Fein and others are seen to be making the running? Would not a vote against the order tonight be perceived

[Mr. Barry Porter]

as yet another example of the running being made all on one side? Surely it is a matter of not lowering our guard, but saying, "Not yet, Mr. Adams, not yet."

Ms Mowlam: The hon. Gentleman referred to a civilised response. I have tried to show in my arguments this afternoon that—*[Interruption.]* Labour's response is—*[Interruption.]* There appears to be a debate between hon. Members, so I might as well not be speaking.

Mr. Porter: I am listening.

Mr. Peter Bottomley (Eltham): I am listening, too.

Ms Mowlam: This is a matter for civilised response. It is a question of differing judgments between us and the Government on how to respond to the changing nature of terrorism. I believe that we should be doing more now to put the right steps in train and to use normal legislation when we can. We could do that without giving clear signs to one side or the other.

I have outlined why Labour has historically opposed the EPA on principle. Will the hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) explain to me how I could now turn round and say, "We voted against emergency legislation when the violence was on the streets, but now that it is not on the streets we are going to change our position"? That would give people not only the wrong sign but a very confusing sign. As I have said, historically, we have opposed the EPA on the grounds of internment and principle, because we are not sure that it has worked, as people have argued. My hon. Friend the Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) pointed out the impact that it has had on families and innocent people. The situation has changed and it is incumbent on us, as it is on others, to respond differently.

I have tried to outline how we would have responded and the changes that we would have introduced if we were in government. We are not in government. I am not able to make the same judgment as the Secretary of State. We shall oppose the motion because disapproving of the order would send out the right signals.

Mr. Winnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that, in the eyes of Sinn Fein and the IRA, there cannot be any doubt whatever of our consistent opposition—over 25 years and more—to terrorism? We have denounced every crime and atrocity committed by the paramilitaries, whichever side they happen to be on.

Ms Mowlam: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention and fully concur with his point. It is not only true that have we criticised every violent act perpetrated by whatever side, but—this is the final answer to the question of the hon. Member for Wirral, South—we have made an effort since the ceasefire to maintain a bipartisan approach with the Government, which has worked in the interests of the process. I put it on record that we shall continue to make that effort, because we share the Government's determination and commitment to keep the process moving forward.

That we can disagree over the renewal of the provisions does not jeopardise that effort, but shows the way in which discussion, negotiations and opposition can take place in the House of Commons, so that common sense and rational argument may win through. We do not need to up the ante and have a problematic debate that would make things difficult.

Mr. Barry Porter: Okay.

Ms Mowlam: Thank you. We regret that the EPA will pass through the House in its entirety again this evening. We had hoped that the Government would take a more long-term view and announce plans for immediate changes. I hope that in any independent review that takes place—even though it may not be of the exact nature that we require—there is some bipartisan co-operation so that we may achieve a common purpose, produce effective counter-terrorist legislation and so that there is no reason to provoke unnecessary divisions. My principal desire is to ensure that from 1996, it will be possible to think of Northern Ireland without emergency powers—for the first time in 74 years.

4.42 pm

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I listened with great interest to the speech of the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam). Sometimes, over the years, some of my hon. Friends have challenged the commitment of the Labour party to the fight against terrorism. I have never made such an accusation. I have the highest regard for the hon. Lady's integrity in the matter, but I quarrel with her judgment: she has failed to perceive that the greatest threat to civil liberties comes not from measures such as those before us, which a democratic state may voluntarily undertake, but from terrorism itself. My serious argument with her is that over the years—and to this day—she has responded insufficiently to the threat of terrorism.

The first point that struck me from reading Mr. Rowe's report was the on-going reality of the threat of Irish terrorism. It is not over. We cannot yet assign it to history. Mr. Rowe lists some points. On many other occasions my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State has said more. The structures and organisations of Irish terrorism are intact. The IRA in particular is still recruiting, training, targeting, researching improvised weapons and raising money overseas to maintain its structures. Unless and until a clear sea change has happened and IRA terrorism especially has declined, we cannot move away from the climate which leads Mr. Rowe to say that in his judgment the provisions are needed and should be renewed for a further year.

The first essential point, therefore, is that, because Irish terrorism is an on-going reality, the measures are still needed.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The hon. Gentleman should think carefully about the words that he is using. We are not talking about Irish terrorism: we are talking about terrorism—unless he is turning a blind eye to Unionist terrorism or assuming that Unionist terrorism is also Irish terrorism. The Unionists have killed more people in the past two years than the IRA. Prior to 1974, they also killed more people than the IRA. We must be careful to be even-handed: we are talking about terrorism, full stop—that is what is unacceptable, whether it be Irish or British.

Mr. Hunter: I do not for one moment dispute what the hon. Gentleman says. He will know from previous debates that I share those sentiments. There has never been any

justification for violence in Northern Ireland. Whether it has come from the loyalist—so-called—or the republican side, it has been equally reprehensible. The hon. Gentleman and I agree wholly on that.

I want to accelerate and be selective in my speech. I noted with particular interest Mr. Rowe's observations on part I of the emergency provisions, which he regarded as the kernel of the provisions. I note that he advocated that there should be no change to the system of scheduled offences. He rejected the argument of the hon. Member for Redcar that there should be certifying in rather than out. I greatly look forward to the time when we can turn—metaphorically—to Mr. Rowe and say that such a procedure is no longer necessary, but my reading of the situation is that we are not yet at that stage, although I share the hon. Lady's hope that we soon will be.

I especially welcome the fact that Mr. Rowe advises the House and the Government to keep the provisions under review throughout the year. Times may change, but I do not yet think that we are at the point where we can dilute or modify any aspect of the emergency provisions.

That sentiment also applies to the Diplock courts and the question of intimidation of juries. All the evidence which comes my way is that the intimidation of witnesses is an on-going reality in Northern Ireland. I therefore believe that it would be irresponsible of the House to do anything other than say—sadly—that, due to that on-going threat of intimidation, we have not reached the point at which the Diplock system can be changed.

My final major point relates to prisoners. I welcomed what my right hon. and learned Friend had to say about the relaxing of compassionate leave arrangements, and I understand that that will be widely and warmly welcomed. I also appreciate the comments that my right hon. and learned Friend made in response to my intervention about Private Clegg. In response to the intervention of the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), I should say that I have to a certain extent played a part in the campaign for the early release of Private Clegg.

However, I wish the hon. Member for Belfast, West to have no illusions: those of us who are campaigning fully understand the tragedy which afflicted the Reilly family; we are in no way diluting or seeking to diminish that, and we understand the heartfelt grief of the family. In sound bites on the media, we answer questions about Private Clegg. I ask the hon. gentleman to accept the reassurance—and if he wishes, to convey it to his constituents—that we understand what a dreadful tragedy happened that night. Nothing that we say about Private Clegg diminishes our heartfelt sympathy for the Reilly family.

The House would be acting irresponsibly if it did not accept that the provisions must remain intact for another year. As Mr. Rowe urged, however, we should keep them under review in the hope that circumstances will soon allow us to relax and move to a more orthodox and normal regime of law and order in Northern Ireland.

4.50 pm

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): I should like briefly to address the question before the House: should we, in the changed circumstances, keep on the statute book by way of renewal an Act which in many respects departs from traditional civil liberties and requires a derogation from the European convention on human rights? In paragraph 30 of his report, Mr. Rowe states:

> "The EPA cuts down some civil rights which the ordinary law provides; and I am talking of freedom from questions in the street, of freedom from searches of one's home, or the right to consult a lawyer at a police station, or trial by jury, to give only a few examples."

The answer to the question is that we should do so only for so long as, and to the extent that, the powers contained in the provisions are required by the seriousness of the threat of terrorism to the safety and liberty of the citizens of Northern Ireland.

There are civil liberties issues on both sides of the argument. The test must be whether the provisions are still required for the safety and liberty of the citizens of Northern Ireland. It is not a matter of whether repeal would sweeten the peace process or whether the process of negotiation would be assisted by concessions. The question involves objective judgments about serious threats: how serious are the security threats, and how necessary are the powers to deal with them?

When one seeks to address the questions, it becomes clear that objective security assessment would currently justify some powers, but not others. Internment is clearly recognised as counter-productive and does not need to remain on the statute book. Mr. Rowe states that it should not be included in the new Act. The value of the power of extended detention is questionable, and clearly a source of great opposition and friction, although the Royal Ulster Constabulary sees it as still necessary. If it is to continue, there should be videotaping of interviews.

The Secretary of State made some welcome comments on that subject when he said that he hoped that the need for the use of powers of detention would quickly decline, but that if it did not, electronic recording should be introduced. I am disappointed that the Secretary of State does not envisage that happening until next year's Act, in whatever form it is introduced. It should be feasible to tape the more limited number of interviews that we expect. I recognise that the security of the tapes is vital, but it must be possible to protect that security. Surely, with co-operation on all sides, and if necessary in a statutory way, we can find a way of dealing with that important issue, which must be resolved.

So long as the intimidation of juries remains such a strong possibility, there remains a need for something along the lines of the Diplock courts. We would prefer three judges rather than one. With the declining number of cases, we believe that that would be feasible—more feasible than it appeared to Mr. Rowe when he made his report.

Some features of the legislation should be a permanent part of normal law. For instance, Northern Ireland is ahead of the rest of the United Kingdom on the licensing of security firms. I hope that the Home Secretary will soon indicate that he is prepared to do something on similar lines for the rest of the United Kingdom, following the report of the Select Committee. Such provisions should be part of normal law. It is arguable that the provisions on funds and money laundering for terrorism should also be part of normal rather than emergency law.

The patchwork pattern suggests the need for an urgent and fundamental review so that preparation can be made for the fact that new legislation is needed in 1996. The Secretary of State has spoken of a review, but indicated

[Mr. A. J. Beith]

that it would not be likely to be feasible in sufficient time to influence the 1996 legislation. I should like the review process to move faster than that.

Whenever it is completed, it can only take account of the security situation as it exists at that time. Change can go no faster than the security situation permits. However, that should not prevent us from taking the opportunity presented by new legislation to have a more fundamental review. The Government need to recognise that the emergency element in any new legislation could be much reduced and perhaps consolidated with a similarly reduced Prevention of Terrorism Act, as some of the provisions will not be needed and can be abandoned, and others can be included in ordinary law.

We have never been happy with the restriction on civil liberty involved in the Act, but we have recognised the overwhelming need for some of the provisions. We have also pointed to ways in which key provisions could remain effective but be subject to more civil liberty constraints. We have suggested time limits for custody on remand, which we still believe are necessary, an independent police complaints procedure, three judges for the Diplock courts and the incorporation of the European convention on human rights into United Kingdom law.

We could not accept the idea of defeating the renewal of the provisions today. The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) gave an honest account of the Labour party's position, stating it clearly and frankly, but no one would be more embarrassed than the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) if the Opposition Whips succeeded in their intention and managed to defeat the order. To wipe all elements of the legislation off the statute book would not satisfy the test that we have set: that there should be a review based on an objective test of which powers are still overwhelmingly necessary and should be retained, even on a temporary basis, and how and with what safeguards such powers as are allowed to remain should appear in new legislation to operate from next year.

Clearly, our hope is that the security situation will be so much improved that most of the Act will be unnecessary. However, after all that the people of Northern Ireland have been through, the judgment must be based not on hope alone but on careful and rational assessment of the risks.

4.55 pm

Rev. Ian Paisley (Antrim, North): I commend to the House the excellent and probing report of the operation of the EPA in 1994, drawn up by John Rowe. I think that the Government have considered it carefully and I welcome the fact that they have not dodged facing up to the terrorism currently being carried out in Northern Ireland.

We have witnessed—as have all right-thinking people in Northern Ireland, both Protestant and Catholic—the concern when concessions are made to IRA/Sinn Fein. It is all right for a member of the Conservative party to criticise the Labour Front-Bench team, but the Secretary of State has shaken hands with the leader of IRA/Sinn Fein. A few months ago, the Secretary of State was loudly protesting to President Clinton that the same man should not be allowed into America. A few weeks later, he flew to America and shook hands with him. There is no difference between the situation then and now as regards the leader of IRA/Sinn Fein. He has not said that he will give up his arms; he has not said that he will give up anything—he holds on to the largest killing machine in western Europe.

It has been widely circulated in the press that one of the Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office met and shook hands with Mr. Gallagher, a leader of the Irish Republican Socialist party, the political wing of the Irish National Liberation Army, which has not called a ceasefire. I should like to know if that report is right or wrong.

I commend Mr. Rowe's report, because he paints a clear picture, even for this year. He states that proscribed organisations have retained their structures fully intact and the internal management processes are as complete as ever. Those organisations exercise influence over individuals and communities and run an illegal system of punishments. We have heard of a number of those punishments. In one police division, there have been 30 such punishments. There has been organised intimidation. Witnesses are driven and intimidated to forget that they have seen the things that they previously testified to having seen. Contractors have been forced off building sites and a local association of schoolchildren's parents has had to abandon some of its plans. Let me make it clear that such activities take place on both sides.

No one is more sharply at the receiving end of the so-called Unionist paramilitaries than me. One has only to read their monthly magazine. Every month, my wife's husband is described as the evil man who must be removed from Northern Ireland politics. I have had bullets fired through my bedroom windows not by the IRA but by so-called Protestant paramilitaries. A home that I bought was bombed by Protestant paramilitaries, so I speak with practical experience about both sides.

The proscribed organisations on both sides are recruiting at this very moment. They are carrying on training; they are researching and refining techniques and technology; arms and weapons are being obtained and moved about, as Mr. Rowe underscores. Targeting is continuing and, on the financial side, funds are being raised by collection, robberies, extortion, racketeering and fraud. They are now threatening certain banks. Of course, when they rob those banks, they use the pound notes. However, an attack has been made on the Northern bank by a front organisation of the IRA calling itself the Equality—the Campaign for Economic Equality. It tells us that we must not accept Northern bank notes and asks

"Why does your School, your Parish, your Club, your Credit Union"

receive them? It gives a whole list of so-called facts, a jaundiced list in my view, as reasons why that should be done.

There is a campaign to destroy the economy. Is that peace? If those people robbed the Northern bank, they would be happy to use all the pound notes they could get for their own ends.

Rev. William McCrea (Mid-Ulster): Bearing in mind the fact that no hon. Members are saying that the structures of the IRA have changed or that recruitment to the IRA has stopped and that no one has challenged the fact that the training of the IRA is continuing and that intimidation by the IRA is prevalent, perhaps my hon. Friend could suggest an answer to me and my constituents

as to why the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland went to the United States of America to take the bloody hand of a cold-blooded terrorist like Gerry Adams and thereby insult the people who have faced terrorism for 25 years?

Rev. Ian Paisley: The Secretary of State should answer that. My views are well known. It is wrong for Ministers to shake hands with those who have not repudiated terrorism, as Gerry Adams certainly has not.

Mr. Rowe says that, in February 1995, an explosive device, which was clearly intended to kill or injure the RUC or armed forces officers who attended to it, was defused. He states that there have been 233 armed robberies, most of which were committed by or on behalf of proscribed organisations, and that the total that has been taken so far is £1.2 million. No one can say that terrorism and acts of terrorism are not going on in Northern Ireland.

If we had a true peace process, it would not need bolstering by concessions to the IRA. The IRA would not exist; it would be finished, over and done with. We are told that, if we speak about those facts, we are the enemy of peace. If there was a just peace, we would not need publicity stunts, fancy packaging, hyped-up gestures or public handshakes. Violence and all the associated criminality would end once and for all. Nothing could upset a pure and meaningful peace.

However, we are not dealing with a pure and meaningful peace process. We are dealing with a strategy that the IRA is using very successfully to achieve its eventual end. It has made it clear in its newspapers that this is just another phase of the struggle to obtain those ends. The troubles are, alas, not over. As I have said, all sorts of other attacks are being made, even on our economy.

Sinn Fein/IRA recently attacked the Prime Minister. When he visited Londonderry, he needed the support of the security forces to get him out of what could have been a very nasty situation, yet we were told that there was to have been a friendly handshake.

At the Sinn Fein conference, we were told about angry voices and marching feet and we will have them during the coming days.

Rev. William McCrea: Surely my hon. Friend appreciates that there is a mighty difference between angry voices and marching feet and beating people practically to death, destroying the hopes and dreams of the people of Northern Ireland and intimidating people—members of the security forces were forced out of their homes the other day—in my constituency right to the very present moment. We hear angry voices in the House and we have heard marching feet on many occasions and will again, but there is a great difference between that and the intimidation and slaughter of innocent people.

Rev. Ian Paisley: Yes, but the marching feet are marching towards violence and the angry voices are inciting violence, as we have seen in Belfast recently. That is going on now.

A remarkable statement was made by a well-known Roman Catholic priest, Dennis Faul of Dungannon, who recently said at a conference that the IRA must retain its weapons to defend itself from extreme Protestants. My experience in Antrim, North, and as a member for the whole of Northern Ireland in the European Parliament, is that the IRA has intimidated Roman Catholic people. It has been vicious in terrorising Roman Catholic people, but the priest tells us that it should keep its guns. It should give up its Semtex and explosive devices, but it should keep its guns. That is the message that is going out to the IRA.

The Prime Minister in answering me the other night parroted a well-known republican and nationalist cliché: let us take the gun out of Irish politics. What needs to be said is: let us take the guns out of the hands of murderers. That is the real message that should go from the House.

Mr. Mallon: I was not at that conference and I cannot comment on what Father Faul did or did not say, but I find it incredible that a man with his record of opposition to violence through the years—especially against the IRA—would have made that statement. I note the alacrity with which the hon. Gentleman will attribute points of view to people in what would generally be called the nationalist community. I think if he started to listen to some of those voices in the House, he might get a more accurate view.

Rev. Ian Paisley: All that I am going to say is that no denial was made by the person concerned in respect of what was said, which was recorded publicly. Editorials were written by the *Belfast Telegraph*, which is no friend of my party, and not a very good friend of the hon. Gentleman's party either. The editorial stated what was said and criticised the man concerned. There was no denial. That is a very important matter.

Rev. William McCrea: My hon. Friend can take it from me that many of my Roman Catholic constituents who have come under the heel of IRA terrorism find such a statement repugnant. They certainly do not want to hear such views.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I accept that point entirely. Social Democratic and Labour party Members, especially the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), have expressed their criticism of the IRA and its tactics. I shall be interested to hear what he says to the House. I now turn to prisoners—

Mr. Barry Porter: I am sorry to interfere in the political duet going on behind me; I speak only for myself. I am mildly puzzled. I may have reservations about some of the tactics being used by my right hon. and hon. Friends in this process. However, does the hon. Gentleman agree that the commitment to a renewal of the order tonight is an indication that the Government have not accepted that Sinn Fein/IRA or any other paramilitary organisation should have its way? Tonight, we are maintaining this legislation for the purpose of ensuring that it is made clear to all these people that the end has not yet come. It is pointless to make futile, pin-pricking gestures at the Government when, clearly, they have not yet given up.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I can only say, "Physician, heal thyself." What the hon. Gentleman says about me should be said about his remarks to Labour Front-Bench Members. The hon. Gentleman judges me because I state the facts, yet he taunts Labour Members by saying, "Look at your attitude to the IRA", while his own Ministers shake hands with the leader of Sinn Fein-IRA. The people of Northern Ireland have noticed that.

[Rev. Ian Paisley]

I do not see why the whole of the people of Northern Ireland should be held to ransom by the tiniest of minorities—the prison population of 1,800 people. Why should their interests be put first in terms of the concessions that have been called for?

I have a humanitarian interest in prisons and I visit them. From a humanitarian point of view, I welcome what the Secretary of State has said today. I have tried to get people out of prison in bitter home circumstances, but because they have not served a certain time, they cannot get out.

I welcome what the Secretary of State has said. I am not against remembering the families of the prisoners because it is they who have suffered the most. It is the mother who has a continually aching heart. It is the wife who has a continually aching heart and it is the children who have a continually aching heart. I do not want anybody to say in the House, "Ian Paisley is opposed to granting special leave in serious home circumstances."

The House knows that I voted against doing away with juries. The House should read the debates because it would see that the change was agreed by means of the Roman Catholic vote in the Committee. The Roman Catholic Attorney-General pleaded with one of his Roman Catholic colleagues to ensure that he would come from the side of jury trials to the side of Diplock courts. The Protestants in the debate were indicted for not having done their duty. Hon. Members should read the reports. In addition, from day one, I was opposed to internment. I do not need any lessons about the practicalities in Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Volunteer Force has 110 paramilitary prisoners, the Ulster Defence Association has 110 and the IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army have 365 prisoners. Some 20 per cent. are serving life sentences. The whole of Northern Ireland is being held to ransom because of that small minority in our prisons. Danny Morrison, who is just out of prison himself, having committed a serious offence, has the cheek to say to the people of Northern Ireland that, if a private of the British Army is released, we must let all the prisoners out. Everyone, even the hon. Member for Belfast, West—I know how he feels for his constituents—agrees on this point. I had a similar case at Clogh Mills in North Antrim. No one could point the finger at my representation, because the victim happened to be a Roman Catholic who was shot by a member of the British Army.

Private Clegg did not go out that night to murder that young girl. The IRA and the Protestant paramilitaries went out deliberately to kill, to set the bomb, to put the bullet in the rifle, to aim the shot and to kill. Private Clegg did not do that. Perhaps the Minister, when he winds up, will comment on the further evidence that is alleged to have come to light. I would also like him to tell us whether he can refer the case back to a further Court of Appeal.

Dr. Hendron: I have a point to make to the hon. Gentleman about all the prisoners in Northern Ireland, both loyalist and republican. We know that many of them have committed the most horrific crimes and that they have slaughtered people in both communities and members of the security forces. Will the hon. Gentleman accept from me, however, that there are people from both communities in prison who, because of the environment in which they grew up, whether the Falls road, the Shankill road, Newry or anywhere else, followed an inevitable course? It was almost inevitable that, in a family of three or four boys, at least one and possibly two might get involved in paramilitary activity. Will the hon. Gentleman accept that the whole question of prisoners should be looked at with some generosity? I am not talking about an amnesty, but about a spirit of generosity as part of the peace process.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I am afraid to say that I take a different view from the hon. Gentleman, as he knows. One could argue in the same way about ordinary criminals. Ordinary criminals in Crumlin road have argued to me that they were brought up in poor circumstances, that they had difficulties and that, therefore, they stole money or even killed. The same law must apply to all. We are talking about criminals who took guns in their hands and shot or killed people; they know that.

When visiting prisons and speaking to prisoners on Sunday mornings, face to face, I have debated this point. I have pointed out to them that they have a price to pay for the crimes they have committed and that the best way in which to pay it is for them to do their prison term without having hanging over their head every day the idea that they might get out early. That idea brings unrest to prisons; this whole debate is bringing unrest among prisoners.

The sooner that the Government say that a tiny minority of 1,800 cannot hold the whole of the Northern Irish people to ransom, the better. That must be said loudly and clearly. That view does not make me popular with the loyalist side of the camp—it is no wonder that the loyalists attack me—and it certainly does not make me popular with my Roman Catholic constituents, especially those in the glens of Antrim who are strongly pro-republican. However, I have to say what I believe is right. I believe that that point must be said loudly and clearly so that we are on a proper basis.

Rev. William McCrea: Perhaps my hon. Friend would ask those who are campaigning strongly to consider the likes of a young man in Magherafelt who is sitting in a wheelchair with both his legs blown off. What hope, consideration and generosity will be given to his future or to two young—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. Historically, interventions have been kept to one question.

Rev. Ian Paisley: I understand how my hon. Friend feels. He himself has been under attack, and it is only by the mercy of God that he and his family have survived that. I understand how he feels. Everyone in the district, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, knows of his genuine humanity. I understand how he feels about the matter.

I ask the Secretary of State to tell us that those who were robbed of their husbands in the Chinook disaster will get favourable treatment. In that way, justice will be seen to be done. I am not speaking with regard to newspaper reports, but to a briefing which I received from the solicitor representing one of the families concerned. I feel strongly about this matter and while I know that it is a matter for the Ministry of Defence, I hope that those on the Government Front Bench today will hear what I say and will make representations.

The House will do right to endorse the legislation. I trust that Labour Members will recognise from those in Northern Ireland that there is still a big problem with terrorism.

5.19 pm

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): Some remarkable statements were made in the opening speeches from the Front Benches. The first came from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. When my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) asked him on what basis the Anglo-Irish Secretariat gave evidence and advice to J. J. Rowe's review, the right hon. and learned Gentleman said that he did not know. He is supposed to have responsibility for that group of civil servants, but he is apparently unaware, or unwilling to tell the House, what has been going on. It is remarkable he can disclaim any knowledge, yet cannot disclaim responsibility for what happens in the secretariat.

Some remarkable statements were made by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam), but I am not sure whether they were recorded by *Hansard*. She said at one point that there seemed little point in her continuing with her speech, and that was an accurate reflection on it.

The hon. Lady stated that the legislation curtails civil rights. J. J. Rowe accurately states on page 6 of his report that the legislation involves no breach of the United Kingdom's international human rights obligations. It is important to remember and to put on record the fact that the legislation involves no breach of our obligations under the European convention or the UN covenant on civil rights.

Another remarkable comment from the hon. Member for Redcar was her proposal that we should drop the present legislation on scheduling in favour of some form of certifying in. Again, J. J. Rowe's report states that certifying in is practicably unworkable unless the decision to certify in is to be taken at the moment of arrest.

The scheduling of the legislation has implications for the admission of statements and the burden of proof; the legislation does not relate simply to the mode of trial. If a decision is made to certify in, how can that decision be operated retrospectively?

J. J. Rowe's report states that, since 31 August 1994, there have been some 51 shootings, and eight explosive devices have been used. Those figures were accurate at the beginning of May, when the report was produced. There have been incidents since then—for example, the unfortunate and highly regrettable incident, which must be condemned, on the Shankhill road the other week, when some people—perhaps loyalist paramilitaries—fired on the police.

There have been other shooting incidents and murders. In addition to the murder in Newry to which hon. Members have referred, there was the murder in Belfast of a person said to be a prominent drug dealer. Everyone knows that that murder was committed by the IRA, although it has neither admitted nor claimed responsibility for it—no doubt in order not to embarrass Ministers who are now embracing the IRA in one place or another.

The IRA is continuing not only the beatings but other devices. It has murdered two people since the ceasefire, but Ministers will not want to dwell on those murders. Those facts underline the continuing need for this legislation.

Reference has been made to the way in which the IRA continues targeting. Targeting is conducted in an obvious way, but it is not just a matter of a person knowing that he is being followed. Policemen out shopping have noticed that a person is observing them. That person goes further and bumps into the policeman, saying "If it wasn't for the ceasefire, you would be dead now." Terrorists have gone up to a policeman in the street and said, "Bang, bang." That sort of terrorism and intimidation continues.

We have reason to believe that persons acting on behalf of the IRA are continuing to access records that would enable people to be targeted. Computer records from the Housing Executive and Inland Revenue records have been accessed. I hope that someone within the Northern Ireland Office is trying to think of counter-measures.

The intimidation of witnesses continues. J. J. Rowe says in his report:

> "The RUC have provided me with many examples, and prosecutions have been abandoned because of the fact that a witness has 'reconsidered' his evidence."

This has continued since the ceasefire, as I know from my personal experience of a case in which witnesses were intimidated.

I am referring to a murder in Lurgan, which took place around the corner from my constituency office. Some local residents were able to give evidence that helped to identify the person concerned, but they were subject to intimidation. This occurred since the ceasefire. Unfortunately, that case was not assisted by an unfortunate lapse that resulted in the names of the witnesses being disclosed to the defence lawyers. Consequently, the names came into the possession of the IRA.

Pending cases, of which we are told there are some 250, must also be handled under the legislation. There will be further cases, because one trusts that the police will not cease their investigations of previous cases where people have not been amenable. One trusts that the Northern Ireland Office has not instructed the police to lay off with regard to old cases. Therefore, there will be scores of cases that the police had not been able to clear up in the past but which, hopefully, they will be able to solve in the future.

We saw a clear example of such cases on a television programme a few weeks ago that featured Mr. Eammon Collins. In it, Mr. Collins boasted of his work in setting people up for murder when he was active on behalf of the IRA. The programme went into detail of the incident where Collins set up the then Lord Chief Justice—now Lord Lowry—for an attack.

Unfortunately, the programme—which identified not only Eammon Collins but a former academic colleague of mine, David Ewings, as being responsible for that attack—did not go on to refer to other incidents in which Mr. Ewings was involved, including the murder of my political and academic colleague Edgar Graham. Although Ewings is an Englishman, he is now domiciled in Dublin, and it is not hard to see why. One hopes that both he and Eammon Collins will be further investigated at some stage.

Thinking of the present whereabouts of those men in Dublin makes one think about extradition—an issue that seems to have gone quiet recently. The Northern Ireland Office has not tried to extradite people from the Republic of Ireland recently. I notice that there has been no such

[Mr. David Trimble]

default by Strathclyde police, who are seeking the extradition from Dublin of two alleged members of the Scottish National Liberation Army in connection with explosive offences. Interest in this matter extends beyond Northern Ireland.

Reference has been made to the Clegg case, but I do not wish to go into it in any detail. I am sure that the Secretary of State was right to say that normal procedures will be followed. The difficulty with the Clegg case stems from the existence of the mandatory life sentence. Had the court been able to reflect the case's extenuating circumstances in its sentence—circumstances to which the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) referred—I am quite sure that the sentence imposed on Private Clegg would have ensured his release by now. I suspect that Clegg's term of imprisonment has been extended by the political considerations that may be at work at present. His release has certainly not been expedited by any political considerations.

There has been a quite improper attempt to link the Clegg case with prisoners generally. Those who represent the interests of paramilitaries in Northern Ireland have called for the early release of prisoners, which could be disguised by an increase in remissions. They suggest that the remission of sentences should be increased by 50 per cent. in the first instance, with a further increase after that. The case in favour of remission is sometimes presented in terms of bringing the law of Northern Ireland into line with that of England. It is worth examining the facts, because the position in England is not that simple.

In England, when a long-term prisoner has served 50 per cent. of his or her sentence, the Home Secretary has the discretion to release that prisoner on licence if that is recommended by the parole board. It is possible for the parole board to recommend that prisoners be released on licence, with the potential for recall should the terms of the licence not be complied with. Under English law, there is no provision for blanket releases after prisoners have served 50 per cent. of their sentences.

The Home Office's attitude to serious terrorist cases may be judged from its concern to ensure that any prisoners who are transferred from England to Northern Ireland remain Home Office cases rather than become Northern Ireland Office cases, in order that such prisoners do not benefit from any relaxation of the regulations in Northern Ireland. The Home Office's concern that prisoners who are transferred from England to Northern Ireland should remain under Home Office regime represents a clear vote of no confidence in the Northern Ireland Office and its policy. However, that is a side issue at the moment.

My party normally finds arguments for uniformity in the laws of Northern Ireland and Great Britain attractive. Consequently, there is a serious argument for extending the English provisions for remission and parole to Northern Ireland. If that were to happen, it would apply to all criminal cases, not just to those who are convicted of so-called terrorist or political offences. One could not draw a distinction between those who were convicted of armed robbery on behalf of a terrorist organisation and those who were convicted of that crime on their own account; nor could one draw a distinction between those who were convicted of murder and those who were convicted of rape.

We would argue for uniformity in the laws of Northern Ireland and Great Britain in this situation if it were not for the well-founded suspicion that any discretion to release prisoners would be influenced by political considerations. We would support such a change if we could be satisfied that decisions would be taken purely on sentencing grounds.

A Northern Ireland parole board would have to be established, but its creation would not in itself satisfy us as to the probity of decision making in view of the likely composition of such a board and the improper influences that would be brought to bear on its operations. I refer to the Anglo-Irish Secretariat in that regard. It goes without saying that a crude halving of sentences, as suggested by the Irish Government, is as unwelcome as their intervention in the Clegg case.

In conclusion, I look to the future, as that is the most important consideration. On page 21 of his report, Mr. Rowe says that the present legislation can be dropped only when the terrorist organisations

"have lost their structure, and influence, and their activity has diminished, so that even if offenders are detected for past terrorist acts, and brought to court, and plead not guilty, a jury can try the case fearlessly and without interference".

Unfortunately, it will be a long time before that can happen. However, a decision must be taken—and taken soon—about the future of the legislation. That decision goes beyond the issue of renewing the order tonight, which of course we shall support.

As Mr. Rowe points out, the prevention of terrorism Act falls for annual renewal in March next year and the current emergency provisions Act expires in August next year. Anti-terrorist legislation cannot be allowed to disappear altogether. Even if a complete and perfect peace were to come to Northern Ireland, if the current Acts were allowed to lapse we would have no port and entry control powers, we would lose the fraud powers and the powers to investigate financing and we would have no measures to deal with international terrorism. We must have provision to deal with those matters, and that provision should contain powers to deal with any continuing or renewed threat in Northern Ireland.

As the prevention of terrorism Act and the emergency provisions Act are so closely interlocked, Mr. Rowe recognises in his review published in February the very strong case for consolidating the two statutes and incorporating the amendments made by the Criminal Justice Act 1993. He states:

"The time has come to put together all the provisions which concern terrorism whether it is terrorism affecting Northern Ireland, the United Kingdom, or international terrorism".

It will come as no surprise to hon. Members to learn that we endorse that view entirely. Therefore, we believe that it would be sensible to plan for a single Act to replace the present legislation which, ideally, should be on the statute book by March 1996 or August 1996 at the latest. Such an Act must have a flexible structure so that parts of it could be enforced at different times and even in different parts of the United Kingdom.

I believe that the approach outlined by the Secretary of State this afternoon is too dilatory. I am not sure exactly what he proposes with regard to a review. I will study his remarks in *Hansard*. He seemed to envisage a slower and much more relaxed approach to the matter, but I do not see any reason for delay. I do not see any difficulty in proceeding to put together a consolidated

Act which could be used to cover the continuing situation in Northern Ireland as well as international terrorism. Crucial decisions should be taken in the course of this year so that the legislation could be on the statute book early next year.

I urged that course early in the year when debating the renewal of the prevention of terrorism Act. It does not seem as though anything has happened, but perhaps it has—perhaps the civil servants have been at work and we can move more quickly in that direction. We urged the Government to move on the issue months ago, and we repeat our plea tonight. If the Secretary of State proceeds in the slow manner that he has indicated, the Government will end up looking foolish, and we do not want that to happen on this issue.

5.37 pm

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): Like all those in the House and outside it, I am deeply disappointed that the renewal of the order is necessary. However, I think that it is necessary for three very clear and straightforward reasons.

First, the threat of renewed killings remains as great as it was eight or nine months ago. Thousands of guns are still in circulation, tonnes of explosives remain stockpiled and the INLA has yet to declare any sort of ceasefire. Unlike the Government, I am afraid that I am not persuaded that it is safe to assume that the ceasefires declared so far are permanent. If they are permanent, why keep the guns? They are not kept for reasons of self-defence, as was argued by the hon. Member for Antrim, North (Rev. I. Paisley), because missiles and machine guns are not needed for self-defence. Why keep the Semtex? I cannot think of anyone who could give a sensible explanation of how Semtex could be used for self-defence purposes. The parties are keeping guns and explosives just in case they need them when they cannot get their own way through negotiation. Until those arms are surrendered, the orders are necessary because the threat is as great as it ever was.

The second clear and simple reason why we should renew the order is that terrorism continues. It is perfectly true that the killings have stopped bar one, or was it two, or perhaps three—who knows? Most of the killings have stopped. We are enormously grateful for that, but the violence and intimidation has not stopped and the extortion continues. The violence and intimidation are almost always of the most foul and brutal variety. People are forced to leave their homes, often on pain of great brutality or even death.

The third clear and simple reason why the order must remain on the statute book is that terrorists are still at large. The perpetrators of the evil killings to which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State referred are still in circulation. The perpetrators of the beatings to which a number of right hon. and hon. Members have referred still roam the streets. The terrorists are still armed, they are still training, targeting victims and raising funds, and, above all, many of them are still dedicated to a united Ireland. I am in absolutely no doubt whatsoever that the order is a necessary response to all these factors in case any terrorist group, on whichever side of the sectarian divide, returns to shootings and bombings.

Over and above those three reasons is another much more depressing and disturbing one. There is a growing prospect of a violent Unionist backlash in the Province.

I comment on Unionist matters with a great deal of trepidation. After all, I freely admit that I was not elected to represent Unionist opinion in Northern Ireland, but Northern Ireland is part of my country and I cannot help but report to the House what I hear, whoever elected me and whoever I represent.

My regular visits to Northern Ireland persuade me that a large and growing number of people in the Province believe that the framework documents are a green agenda leading inevitably to a united Ireland and that the Government's neutrality is designed to persuade people in the Province to accept the inevitable. I note with some horror that a large and growing number of people in the Province believe that the Government's repeated failure to stand by their stated position proves that they are on a course for peace at any price.

Finally, I keep hearing that people in the Province believe that it is only a matter of time before terrorists are released from prisons in yet another futile attempt to buy off the IRA. I am in no doubt at all that many Unionists feel betrayed. If we show them that the gun and the bomb achieve results, they may, God forbid, take the point.

Before I leave the issue of prisoners, I should underline what I have said before in the House: I am not interested in why somebody blows up young children or guns down innocent people in a pub. They are horrendous crimes committed by evil people. Patriotism is no defence and, with the greatest respect to the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron), one's home background is no excuse for such evil. The assumption that they will not do it again if peace breaks out is, in my judgment, no justification for deciding that punishment is not necessary or richly deserved. Let me once again make it clear to my right hon. and learned Friend that I cannot and will not support any early releases or special paroles, or any amnesties which are not available to all convicted criminals throughout the United Kingdom.

It is a great pity that renewing the order is again necessary, but I have no doubt that it is what we have to do. I consider it a great pity that the Labour party will again divide the House. Lest they misunderstand me, I repeat that I do not for a moment doubt that the Labour party loathes terrorism, just as we loathe it, but voting against the order sends terrorists the wrong signals because they thrive on division and are experts at exploiting weakness. If we divide the House, that signal will go out tonight.

Terrorism is still rampant in Northern Ireland. Only the killing—or most of it—has stopped. If there are those in the Province who believe and claim that the order harms the peace process, we can send them a very simple message. All they have to do to make the order unnecessary is hand in their guns, surrender their Semtex and stop the beatings. If they do that, the order is unnecessary, and until they do that it has my full support.

5.46 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): Let me initially refer to some points made by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire). I look forward to reading the *Hansard* record of his speech. I make no apology in the House or anywhere else for wanting to create and be

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

part of a united Ireland by peaceful democratic means, and I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman respects that political view. If I am misinterpreting what he said, I shall most certainly adjust my opinion.

Mr. Wilshire: If the hon. Gentleman, for whom I have a great deal of respect, believes that I was denying him the right by democratic means to fight for what he passionately believes, I apologise to him. It was not what I intended to say and I trust that it is not what I said.

Mr. Mallon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that clarification.

Let me start by clarifying some points concerning the case of Private Clegg. I no more wish or desire to keep that young man in gaol than I desire to keep any young person in prison in Northern Ireland for one day longer than is absolutely necessary. I take no pleasure whatsoever from the fact that young people, whoever they may be or from wherever they come, are in gaol as a result of the past 25 years and what our antecedents have left us. Unless we get it right, we shall leave to posterity the trap in which many young people find themselves and which has resulted in their presence in gaol.

Private Clegg is in the same position as many young people that I know personally and have visited. It is from that point of view that I make my remarks, but I should like the case to be dealt with as part of a wider approach to the problem of young people in prison and not as a one-off incident that can and will be interpreted—rightly or wrongly—as one law for British soldiers in Northern Ireland and another for young people from the Shankhill road, the Falls road or South Armagh. Therein lies the danger in the controversy and the debate and therein lies the problem that will continue to crop up until a decision is made.

We should recall Lord Denning's remark:

"Be you ever so high, the law is above you".

We cannot have one law for one group of people and a different law for another. I ask the Secretary of State and the Government to ensure that we consider all those young people in gaol for whatever reason because it is partly our fault. It was partly the fault of the House and those who preceded us here. We gave that generation of people a dud hand and when they had to play that dud hand, many of them were prey to influences that we hope our own families would never have to face.

If we were all in that position, we might not be so high and mighty when we judge other people. It is easy to carry one's rectitude like a banner and salute it as often as possible. That is much more difficult if one is sitting in a trap on a large estate in Belfast or South Armagh and knows the peer pressures, pressures on the community and the difficulties into which one's children are getting—and that there is nothing that one can do about it. Against that background, I ask the Secretary of State carefully to study the context.

From the remarks by the hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter), it almost seems that to comment on the Clegg affair constitutes an interference with due process. That attitude has prevailed in the House for some time. If a view contrary to that held on the Tory Benches is expressed, that is seen as interference with due process. Let us put that into perspective. The Secretary of State is considering a submission from a committee of public servants chaired by Department's permanent secretary. That will be an Executive act. Due process has taken place in three courts, including the House of Lords, which upheld the conviction. One will be an Executive act, decided by a politician on the advice of civil servants. The other was the due process of law, decided by three courts.

We must ask who is upholding the primacy of the law and the principle of equality before the law in the Clegg case. We should answer that question honestly for ourselves. However we answer, we should do so with the compassion to which Private Clegg is entitled—as is anyone who gets themselves into bother in the north of Ireland because of the political, social and economic mess that earlier generations left behind.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire). The Prime Minister, Secretary of State and Minister of State have been most courageous in probably the most difficult set of circumstances that any Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has ever handled. Mistakes have been made, but I put on record my appreciation of and admiration for the Prime Minister, Secretary of State, Minister of State and other Ministers.

My one fear is that, in their reticence, they have had to be dragged on to the dance floor far too often in the last nine months, instead of taking the initiative. They should have got it all over with in the first week—getting the handshakes out of the way. If that had been done, the Secretary of State, Minister and everybody else would have been saved a lot of problems. That would have prevented Sinn Fein from mounting its public relations exercise of the past nine months, in which the unwitting players have been the Secretary of State, the Minister and the rest of us—and I include myself.

I shall give another piece of advice that will not be listened to—it concerns dealing with the realities, not theories, of my life, the lives of people who live around me and the lives of all the young people in prison. The Government should not build up decommissioning as something that they can deliver, because they cannot and would not. It is a climb-down issue. [*Interruption.*] Hon. Members can laugh to their hearts' content but anybody who knows anything about Irish history—be it the history behind the hon. Member for Mid-Ulster (Rev. William McCrea) or the one of which I speak—knows that decommissioning will not happen according to expectations.

I am prepared to face the hecklers across the Chamber in one year's time and ask them whether I was right on that climbdown issue. I say that because I do not want the good work of the Prime Minister, Secretary of State, Minister of State and others devoted to something that they cannot fully deliver. I believe that they know that for themselves.

Whatever noises are made in the background, and whatever platitudes we hear, the reality is that the peace that has been created will last. Nothing of the scepticism that has entered the debate with certain implications will deflect anyone from maintaining that peace. Nobody in this debate should detract from that peace, which is tangible on the ground in the north of Ireland, among the people I represent and throughout the north of Ireland.

If there are individuals whose sourness of heart is such that they cannot conceive lasting peace, they should examine not just their political analyses but their consciences and ask themselves why they are so sour at

the prospect of lasting peace. The people who have suffered deeply from the absence of peace will say that it is here now because the people of the north of Ireland made it clear to the paramilitary groups and everybody else that 25 years of hell was enough. That is why the peace will last.

I say to the hon. Member for Spelthorne that peace is more important than his academic arguments or political heckling, or any point that he or I make in the House. That lasting peace means lasting lives. British soldiers, my neighbours and members of other communities would otherwise be dead. Hon. Members should think before they make argumentative points about a matter that goes to the heart of a situation that we have been dealing with for a long time. As Yeats wrote:

"Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."

The hon. Member for Spelthorne is far enough from the problems to be argumentative about them.

The assumption has been made that the legislation is required and that if it did not exist, there would be a terrible collapse of the entire system. John Rowe QC has been used as the authority. We read his report on the prevention of terrorism, and my opinion of that assessment has not changed. He said then that he was not part of the peace process, and he confirmed that in his latest reports. What does the measure do that could not be achieved by ordinary legislation?

Sir Louis Blom-Cooper, to whom the Secretary of State referred, said in his report:

"I think that the provisions of the criminal justice system are well capable of exercising effective powers to deal with terrorist crime, at the same time maintaining in a civilised society the important safeguards for the individual."

Thus speaks the Government's appointee as commissioner for the holding centres, giving his informed opinion as an eminent lawyer—that the criminal law as it stands, without emergency legislation, can cope. We should respect his view.

The foregoing statement can be looked at more objectively in the light of some statistics on convictions obtained under the emergency provisions. They are most informative. Of all the convictions obtained under the emergency provisions in 1992, 228 were for motoring offences; 184 were for unattended parking in a controlled zone; 25 were for leaving a vehicle unsecured; and 16 were for failing to render a vehicle incapable of being driven off. In the same year, there was precisely one conviction for failing to stop for members of the security forces, and there were two for failing to answer security forces' questions.

We have been told for the past three hours that this legislation is essential to our future safety. In 1993, 237 convictions had to do with motoring offences, and 179 were to do with cars being left in security zones. Thirty were for unsecured vehicles. There was one conviction for attempting to illicit information useful to terrorists, and there was one for wearing hoods in public places. There were six convictions for possession of information useful to terrorists. For 1994, there were 171 convictions of the motoring type, but there was just one for recording information useful to terrorists, and one for collecting such information. This information is recorded in *Hansard*, in the form of replies to questions by the hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam).

I remind the House that we are being told that the whole fabric of society would crumble without these provisions—

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman will find, at paragraph 26 of Mr. Rowe's report, the observation that, if it is thought that the police need the support of the Army and the other armed forces to help them carry out their policing responsibilities, part II of the Act, at any rate, needs renewing, because it is the part that gives the Army the jurisdiction to carry out its supportive role.

The hon. Gentleman will know that, in South Armagh, there is—regrettably, by reason of the enhanced terrorist threat as compared with the rest of the Province—a greater need for the Army to continue to patrol in support of the police than there is elsewhere. Is he seriously telling his constituents to second-guess the police and to tell them that they do not really need the support of the Army, so the whole Act, including part II, can go?

Mr. Mallon: No. I am delighted that the right hon. and learned Gentleman gives me this opportunity to clarify what I am saying. My point about Mr. Rowe is that he does not see the need for any change in the whole legislation—not a single iota. Secondly, for as long as we have emergency legislation and the police in South Armagh depend on the Army, we will not be able to break the cycle. I suggest that the police service starts to operate some form of normality in South Armagh during this period of peace, however long hon. Members think it may last. Personally, I believe that it is permanent. That is how to reach the stage where part II of the Act is not needed: that will be the test. I happen to think that my feelings about South Armagh are more closely related to the facts than are Mr. Rowe's.

I do not wish to discuss the Diplock courts in detail. I do, however, think it unfortunate that they have come to be known as Diplock courts at all. When establishing them, Lord Diplock stated unequivocally that any court that did not comply with the minimum requirements of the European convention on human rights was not worthy of the name of a court of law; should not form part of the ordinary criminal jurisdiction system; and should not be staffed by ordinary judges who sit in other criminal courts. The rationale behind that remark was that, otherwise, the judiciary would risk losing the respect and trust that are of paramount importance to the functioning of the judicial system in Northern Ireland. I am quite sure that Lord Diplock has often had cause to regret the fact that his name has been associated with this system of courts.

We must realise the damage that emergency legislation has done over the years. I tell the Secretary of State that we have a chance now to start to redress that damage, not by giving way to terrorism or by allowing the creation of a lawless society, but by creating, for the first time since the state was founded, a system of justice, of policing and of law that the entire community can be part of, can support and can defend. That will in itself prevent a repetition of the events of the past 25 years.

It is easy enough for John Rowe QC to say that he is not part of the peace process. Fortunately, the Secretary of State is part of it. As such, he has a responsibility to show the community in the north of Ireland that he is confident of the peace process and will move on it—

Sir Patrick Mayhew: The hon. Gentleman interrupted me a couple of times, so I do not feel too diffident about inviting him to give way. I ask him to reflect on what he

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

has just said about the Diplock courts. He clearly implied that the so-called Diplock courts are incompatible with the provisions of the European convention on human rights. That is not so. Their legitimacy, in terms of the convention, has been upheld time and again by the European Court of Human Rights. The hon. Gentleman is casting imputations against the High Court and senior county court judges who sit in those courts. I hope, therefore, that he will reflect that what he has said gives rise to a most unjust and unwarranted implication.

Mr. Mallon: I made no such implication. I was not referring to the judges who man the courts or to how they are handled. I was referring to what Lord Diplock said in the context of the European Court of Human Rights. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must recognise that some of the cases that arrived before the courts followed arrests and detentions that represented a derogation from the provisions of the European convention on human rights. That is why I recommend re-reading what Lord Diplock said when he set up the courts.

I end with a plea to the Secretary of State. Whether he likes it or not, history has made him a main player in what is going to happen at the turn of the century. He will certainly have my support for doing all that he can to ensure the peace. Together with the Minister of State, he has a major role to play in moving towards the real negotiations which alone will solve this problem. I beg him not to be dragged on to the dance floor but to go out there and take a lead. Only in that way will he be able to advance on the considerable role that he has played hitherto.

6.9 pm

Mr. Thomas McAvoy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): I shall be exceptionally brief because I know that other hon. Members wish to speak.

I am disappointed that the Secretary of State has not taken the opportunity to move forward along the lines that my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) urged while speaking from the Opposition Front Bench. We are part of the peace process, as is the Secretary of State. I feel that he should be more progressive. I understand that there are quandaries and difficulties, but I would have liked to see him move forward more quickly.

6.10 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): I, too, shall be brief. I know that the debate is coming to an end.

I pay tribute to the Secretary of State for his opening words. He drew attention to the dangers that we face when emergency legislation seemingly becomes permanent—legislation that was produced as a temporary measure. I am glad that the right hon. and learned Gentleman recognises that there are dangers. That has been the force of my argument over the years. I have argued that there is a danger to democracy.

An additional factor should be taken on board. We are permitted to use emergency legislation in terms of international law only when there is an emergency. If Britain has been a vast contributor to international law, we have a duty to live up to it. It is possible to argue that there is still an emergency in Northern Ireland. I think that the Secretary of State will agree with me, however, that it is becoming more and more difficult to argue that that is the position in legal terms. That being so, we need to start phasing out emergency legislation. The sooner we say so clearly, the better.

On that ground, I think that the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) is wrong to say that we should vote for the motion because we want some of the legislation. If the Government were still taking the tough, hard line that was taken when the paramilitarists were functioning as military groups, the right hon. Gentleman would still have to support the Government because he wants some provisions of the emergency provisions legislation.

We must vote against legislation when we are against it—this answers the point raised by the hon. Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire)—and similarly when we are against parts of it that we cannot amend which we consider to be important. We should never make an apology for that. The message that we send out by adopting that approach is that we are not divided but we believe in a democratic process. I know of no more powerful argument than that.

I agree entirely with the Secretary of State that the profoundly important issue of prisoners should not be linked with the Private Clegg case. We all know, however, that it is seen in that way, inevitably, in Northern Ireland. The hon. Member for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) told us that he is campaigning for the release of Private Clegg and that in so doing he means no insult to the victim or the victim's family. He made the point well. Those of us who campaigned for the release of the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four faced a similar problem, even though we were arguing that those who had committed those offences were still going free. These are complex arguments.

I make no complaint that Army officers are involved in trying to secure the release of Private Clegg. I understand their involvement because they come from the same group. However, as the hon. Member for Belfast, West (Dr. Hendron) has said, the community that he represents in part has strong feelings about the Clegg case. It has a right to ask why there is one rule for British service personnel and another for the people of Northern Ireland. That is the way in which that community sees the issue.

It is important for newspapers to recognise that one of the reasons for some to say that there are double standards is that some areas of the press, such as the *Daily Mail*, campaigned to keep the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four in prison and are now campaigning to get Private Clegg out of prison. If there is a miscarriage of justice involving a British soldier or someone accused of a terrorist offence in Great Britain or in Northern Ireland, Unionist or Republican, it remains a miscarriage of justice. No other approach is acceptable.

Paratroopers form an elite group. They are selected and trained in a specific way. They are trained to be aggressive and to react quickly. That is what is needed to be a paratrooper, and that is right. That means that paratroopers are not the best group to use in what is essentially a peacekeeping role. Private Clegg might not be in his present position if he had been in one of the ordinary regiments, the members of which are not trained in the way of paratroopers. I make that point as much for paratroopers as for anyone else. They are aggressive

attacking troops. Other troops have better training for a peacekeeping role. That is why it is a mistake to use paratroopers in Northern Ireland.

When it comes to the release of prisoners, we have always had to make a judgment on parole, life sentences and conditional release schemes, for example. If someone is no longer regarded as a danger to the public, that is one of the factors to be taken into account when considering early release. A feature that has been missing in the debate, especially on the part of representatives of the Unionist parties, is acceptance of the peace process. We have all made strides, but it must be recognised that the leadership of the Unionist paramilitarists and that of the Republican paramilitarists have made a giant step. That should be said. It is in our interests that the leaderships of the two groups stay intact.

I saw the leaders of the Unionist parties linked to the terrorist campaign of the past only a few months ago. They recognised, just as do the leaders of Sinn Fein, that if their troops decide to return to violence they, the leaders, will be swept aside. It is in our interests and those of everyone else that the two groups continue the peace process. That is why I argue strongly that we should start to phase out emergency legislation.

The Secretary of State has made quite a good start but there are issues to which I should love to refer. They were taken up ably by my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar. We could go much further in terms of the Diplock courts. We must get the message over that we believe in the peace process and that we are proceeding as rapidly as possible.

6.16 pm

Mr. Tony Worthington (Clydebank and Milngavie): There is no dispute in the House about the need for anti-terrorist legislation. The question is whether it should be the present legislation and whether it is needed now. The issue was well covered by my hon. Friends the Members for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) and for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

We welcome some parts of the Secretary of State's approach. For example, we welcome what he said about introducing an electronic recording system in holding centres. I hope that the Minister of State will tell us why it cannot be introduced now. That is something that has become lost, as it were. It would be an important message. We welcome the relaxation of prison rules on compassionate leave. There was a welcome for it throughout the House.

The mystery deepens slightly when we come to consider what is to succeed the current legislation and the Government's approach. It seems that the Government intend to introduce a short-term emergency provisions Bill next year. What does "short-term" mean? The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble), who is not now in his place, said that such an approach was too dilatory. As I understand it, the legislation that the Government propose would need to be ready for the Queen's Speech in November. The Government must have a clear idea now about what they are intending to do by means of the new measure. Not one word has crossed the Secretary of State's lips about how he will amend the EPA.

From the Opposition's point of view, it would be intolerable for a new EPA to include internment powers. Surely it would be easy for the Government to say that any new EPA will not include such powers. Many hon. Members have talked about the limitations of the Diplock courts. Some have said that with the current legislation it is difficult to phase out those courts. It would have been handy for the Secretary of State to say that that is his intention in introducing a new EPA.

What mystified me most about the Secretary of State's approach is that he said that there would be a new short-term EPA. How short-term? He also said that, at some stage in future—he could not say when—he would start an independent review of the legislation, that it would attempt to put together the EPA and prevention of terrorism Act and, even more idealistically, that he would be hoping to do that on a United Kingdom basis. That is not a short job. If the Secretary of State does not intend to start that review this Session, how long will it take? How long will the short-term EPA be in existence?

I am rather worried, as was the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon), that the wrong messages would be sent, and that, no matter how long the peace process lasted and was developing, there would not be solid messages going out about changes in the legislation by the Government.

Mr. Robathan: The hon. Gentleman is making sensible and reasonable points, but Conservative Members understand that the Labour party will vote against the measure, because some Opposition Members are more concerned about civil rights than they are about the rights of victims. The hon. Gentleman speaks of messages. The message that he and the Labour party are sending today by voting against the prevention of terrorism Act, I regret to say, is that the Labour party is soft on terrorism and soft on the causes of terrorism.

Mr. Worthington: That matter was raised earlier by the hon. Gentleman, and he did not understand a perfectly simple reply then. I have no optimism that my teaching powers are greater than those of my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar, so I shall ignore his point, because it has been dealt with.

Since we last debated the EPA, there have been two ceasefires. We should point out the difference that they have made to the quality of life in Northern Ireland, and pay tribute to all the people who have contributed to them. Labour Members—this is a partial answer to the hon. Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan)—accepted that there has not been a complete end to terrorism. While there are punishment beatings, there is terrorism. Terrorism is the use of violent and intimidating tactics to achieve political ends. That is how it is defined in the Act.

When parties with links to paramilitary organisations say that they do all they can to prevent beatings, they lack credibility. They have to realise—this applies to both sets of paramilitaries—that they would become credible as democratic organisations and totally remove any case for these powers if they used their influence to stop the beatings. When organisations use intimidation and terror to control areas, to promote crime and racketeering, they undermine the rule of law. They also undermine those of us who want to stimulate the Government to maintain the momentum to normality in law enforcement. We are undermined by the actions of those who have influence on the paramilitaries.

For their part, the Government must press on with all possible safe measures to normalise policing. We welcome the withdrawal of the Army from policing

[Mr. Worthington]

matters, and the many small steps that have been taken by the Chief Constable to move towards the ideal of a police service, not a police force. We welcome the recent substantial increases in the number applying to join the Royal Ulster Constabulary from the Catholic community. We wish to support the RUC in all its moves to build trust and confidence across the communities.

We hope that the present tense relationship between the RUC and the Police Authority can be repaired and then strengthened. The challenge to help the police to become welcome to all in both traditions who want a law-abiding and peaceful community must not be weakened by division between those at the top of the RUC and those at the top of the Police Authority. A new relationship must be worked out, and it needs their joint co-operation.

There are damaging effects from unfair law when there is armed warfare in the country. Even more damaging is unfair law when there is a ceasefire. It is crucial, with all due prudence, to keep the momentum going. It is disturbing that the Government do not seem ready to commit themselves to a full replacement for the EPA ready for the Queen's Speech. That would have been the right way ahead. There has to be a new Act of Parliament, and to move to short-term expediency seems to be the wrong way of going about that. Opposition Members have said that there need to be powers on fraud and racketeering, proscription of paramilitary organisations and the threat of international terrorism. We want that to be done in the context of the United Kingdom as a whole and with all-party support. That may be idealistic, but it has to be the target that we set ourselves.

We believe that more could be done now. It is a pity that the Secretary of State has not felt able to come here with a promise from the Chief Constable that, as a matter of policy, he would always, where possible, use the powers that are available to him under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (Northern Ireland) rather than the EPA powers. I realise that that is a matter not for the Secretary of State but for the Chief Constable, but it would have been handy to have that assurance.

We would have preferred to suspend EPA powers covered by existing criminal law, but a declaration, by the Chief Constable, of the intention of using ordinary criminal law where possible would be welcome. It is clear that the Diplock courts cannot be stopped overnight, but we have heard nothing from the Government about how those courts are to be phased out and jury trials phased in. We heard earlier that that cannot be done easily within the present EPA, but jury trials have to be phased in at some time, and the Government have to tackle that, because, as the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh said, many of the Diplock court cases have been for offences that have had nothing to do with political violence.

It is disappointing that the Government have not felt able to come to the House with a promise to give access to legal advice in holding centres. We are not asking for anything that endangers anybody. We simply want to go forward prudently with amendments to these laws. We have offered a bipartisan approach to the Government, for which they have expressed some appreciation. But will the Government take up our offer of talks so that, when the successor legislation to the EPA and PTA is proposed, it will have the support of the whole House? Will the Minister accept that offer?

6.27 pm

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Sir John Wheeler): I welcome the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) to his duties on the Opposition Front Bench, and at the outset say to him that of course the Government would welcome talks with him and his colleagues about the future of the legislation. If we can proceed with a wide measure of agreement, that would indeed be most welcome to the House, the country as a whole and, of course, to all others who may have an interest in the subject.

We have made a very firm commitment indeed to the review of the legislation. It will be an independent review. It will be a review that must take place having regard to the prevailing security situation, which must clarify itself in the time ahead before we can firmly decide when that review should start. I am very glad to make that response to the hon. Gentleman at the outset of my remarks.

I think that one would agree that this has been a very good debate. It has also been an unusual one, given that we are now more than nine months into the Provisional IRA ceasefire and eight into that declared by the so-called loyalists. The intervening period has, thankfully, been free from major terrorist atrocities, but, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State told the House earlier, terrorist organisations on both sides remain all too capable of returning to violence. That has been a theme of the debate.

The renewal of the legislation has been supported by a number of hon. Members, including my hon. Friends the Members for Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter) and for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire) and the hon. Members for Antrim, North (Rev. Ian Paisley) and for Upper Bann (Mr. Trimble). They too have referred to the state of readiness of the various terrorist organisations and their ability to return to violence, and it is against that backcloth that I invite the House to support the Government.

We hope that what I have described will not happen, and our efforts are directed towards that end; but our considered judgment is that it is not yet time to dispense with any of the powers conferred by the Act. They still have a role to play. Military activity in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary is down to some 25 per cent. of previous levels, and two major units have been relocated from Northern Ireland. For the first time since 1969, no soldiers regularly patrol the streets of Belfast. Policemen and policewomen are increasingly able to devote their efforts to protecting all communities from ordinary crime.

The Government have responded to the new situation in other ways. In October, all the closure orders on cross-border roads were revoked, and the physical work to reinstate the crossings is now largely complete. It has been welcomed. Patrol bases and vehicle checkpoints no longer cause extensive delays to the motoring public, disrupting everyday life. The security forces have decided to remove the vehicle checkpoint at Clady, on the Tyrone-Donegal border, and work will begin shortly. That is an operational decision by the security forces to rationalise the network of border patrol bases—those that must remain.

The civilian search unit in Belfast, which has existed since 1972 to protect the city and other centres of population—two of whose members were murdered in the late 1970s—will be stood down from the end of this

month; we owe it our deep gratitude for its services over the years. I can also announce that, from 1 August, the great majority of restrictions under the vehicle control zone order—which is made under the Act, and which restricts parking and access at many locations throughout Northern Ireland—will be lifted. I am sure that many hon. Members, in particular, will welcome that announcement. It will represent a significant return to normality, and I believe that it will be greatly welcomed by the wider public in Northern Ireland.

Some valuable points have been made in the debate; I shall deal with as many as I can. A number of hon. Members referred to the Clegg case. The hon. Member for Antrim, North asked whether any further evidence had been received. None has been received, but I can tell the House that, if my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State received any new evidence, he would of course consider it—as is his bounden duty—and ensure that it went before the appropriate judicial authorities.

My right hon. and learned Friend and I will consider the report of the Life Sentence Review Board objectively. We will not be influenced from any quarter or by any lobby or political consideration; we will reach our view on the basis of the facts and circumstances of the case. It could not be otherwise.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Ms Mowlam) referred to flexible compensation for RUC members who have been injured, and for the families of those who have been killed. She was present last week when the hon. Member for Upper Bann introduced an Adjournment debate on the issue. In my reply to that debate, I undertook to examine any details of cases that the hon. Gentleman chose to supply; I stand by my word, and will attempt to establish what further compensation or assistance may be properly available.

The report of the inquiry into the Chinook helicopter disaster will be published shortly. Copies will go to the dependants—to family members who have a right to receive them. It will be a matter for the Ministry of Defence, in accordance with usual law and custom, to decide the level of compensation; that is not a matter with which I can deal directly this evening.

I particularly welcomed the reference by the hon. Member for Redcar to knowledge of, and the return of, the bodies of those who have been murdered by terrorist gangs in Northern Ireland over the past 25 years. She struck an important chord: that would bring immense relief to the families of those who still yearn to grieve in the knowledge of where their loved ones have been disposed of. I hope that the hon. Lady's words—and, indeed, the sympathy of the House—will be conveyed to those who may have influence in the matter, and may be able to convey any appropriate information to the authorities to enable that to be done.

I hope very much that we shall see the establishment of lasting peace in Northern Ireland. Let it not be forgotten that successive emergency provisions Acts have played their part in enabling us to reach this stage. The necessary amendments that they have made to the judicial process, and the powers that they have conferred on the security forces, have provided the legal framework for firm and resolute action against the terrorist gangs in Northern Ireland.

I believe, however, that we now stand poised on the brink of new opportunity, and look forward to the day when the 1991 Act will no longer be necessary. Many of the comments made in today's debate—

It being three hours after the commencement of the debate, MADAM DEPUTY SPEAKER *put the Question, pursuant to Order [6 June].*

The House divided: Ayes 286, Noes 190.

Division No. 162] **[6.37 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth (Mole V)
Baker, Nicholas (North Dorset)
Baldry, Tony
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian (Dorset)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Peter
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Carlile, Alexander (Montgomery)
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Cartiss, Michael
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'cliff)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Curtis, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'shire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsythe, Clifford (S Antrim)
Forth, Eric
Foster, Don (Bath)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A (SW Cambs)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Hague, William
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence

Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes, Robert G (Harrow W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellet-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lynne, Ms Liz
McCrea, The Reverend William
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Maddock, Diana
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (NW Hants)
Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paisley, The Reverend Ian
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Rendel, David
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Robinson, Peter (Belfast E)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shephard, Colin (Hereford)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Smyth, The Reverend Martin
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Trimble, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macclesfield)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Dr. Liam Fox.

NOES

Ainger, Nick
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, N (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Dafis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Eagle, Ms Angela
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fatchett, Derek
Flynn, Paul
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Hendron, Dr Joe
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley North)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Sheff'd, H)
Jamieson, David
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
McGrady, Eddie
McLeish, Henry
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Mahon, Alice
Mallon, Seamus
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike (N Wkshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Pearson, Ian
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Chris (Isl'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Winnick, David
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John Cummings and
Mrs. Barbara Roche.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 18th May, be approved.

Orders of the Day

Medical (Professional Performance) Bill

Not amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

Schedule

SUPPLEMENTARY AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

6.55 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 5, line 17, at end insert—

'.—(1) Section 37 (unfitness to practise through illness, etc.) shall be amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (3)—

(a) in paragraph (b), after the word "expiry" there shall be inserted the words "(or termination under subsection (3B)(b) below)"; and

(b) for the words "; but the Committee shall not" there shall be substituted the words "; but, subject to subsection (3A) below, the Committee shall not".

(3) After subsection (3) there shall be inserted—

"(3A) The Health Committee may give a direction extending a period of suspension indefinitely where—

(a) the period of suspension will, on the date on which the direction takes effect, have lasted for at least two years, and

(b) the direction is given not more than two months before the date on which the period of suspension would otherwise expire.

(3B) Where the Health Committee have given a direction for indefinite suspension, they—

(a) shall review the suspension when requested to do so by the person whose registration is suspended (but not until two years after the date on which the direction takes effect and not more than once in any period of two years), and

(b) having carried out such a review, may direct that the suspension be terminated.".'.

Amendment No. 1 will give the General Medical Council's health committee the power to suspend a doctor's registration indefinitely where he has already been suspended for two years. The health committee would have to make that direction within two months of the expiry of the current period of suspension. The amendment would amend the health committee procedures to bring into effect the proposals made by the GMC in a consultation document last year. The power will be similar to that already proposed in the Bill for the committee on professional performance.

The Government recognise the benefits that the amendment would have for sick doctors with a grave and persistent impairment who are currently subject to annual hearings. Those hearings can be stressful, may raise false hopes and may have a demoralising effect on the doctor.

The Opposition introduced a new clause of a similar nature in Standing Committee, for which I commend them. I agreed then to accept the change in principle and to introduce a Government amendment on Report. I am pleased, therefore, to commend amendment No. 1 to the House.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): I welcome the amendment. As the Minister rightly said, we discussed this topic in Committee in relation to an Opposition amendment. When we pressed the Minister on

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

the matter, he was able to give us an assurance that the Government hoped to return to it on Report and he has done so.

There is no division between the parties on the matter of substance. Both our amendment and the Government's amendment do essentially the same thing. They amend the second of the three procedural devices open to the General Medical Council in such a way that, when the health procedures have been invoked, the council has the power, which it did not have before, to suspend a medical practitioner from the register indefinitely. That is intended not as a punishment or disciplinary measure, but to give a medical practitioner whose health may be failing the chance to recover before coming before the GMC for reaccreditation.

The existing procedure requires an annual review, which in some circumstances can be a cruel and disadvantageous thing. That will be superseded, where appropriate, by the arrangements that we are putting in place today. I therefore join the Minister in supporting his version of how we should do this rather than ours. Of course, he has the benefit of the parliamentary draftsmen and we do not.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I am very much in favour of the amendment and have no disagreement with it. My anxiety about it is that it does not do anything to tackle a problem which exists in the national health service and which I hope that Ministers will deal with in some other way.

Clear evidence exists that doctors who have been suspended on pay for various misdemeanours falling short of extreme unfitness to practice are able to work while their cases are being examined or explored and, as I understand it, to earn a salary in other parts of the NHS. Clearly, that is malpractice and should not be allowed. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister could assure me that the matter is being considered elsewhere; otherwise, it would be handy to deal with it in the schedule.

Mr. Alex Carlile (Montgomery): I should immediately say that I am a lay member of the General Medical Council's health committee. On the comments that have just been made, that issue is not in any way connected with the GMC. I share the views of the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), but that matter needs to be dealt with in the structures of the national health service rather than in the Bill.

I welcome this change in the law. I have on the floor of my office five cases containing papers for next week's meeting of the GMC's health committee. The demand of annual reviews on the hard-working and high-quality staff of the GMC is very great; it is also very expensive. The change is a practical one which recognises the merits of the case and it will be welcomed throughout the GMC.

Amendment agreed to.

7 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 6, line 15, at end insert—

'6A—(1) Section 42 (Preliminary proceedings as to professional misconduct and unfitness to practise) shall be amended as follows—

(2) In subsection (3)(c) for the words "two months" there shall be substituted the words "six months".

(3) After subsection (3) there shall be inserted—

"(3A) The Preliminary Proceedings Committee may, subject to subsection (4) below, if satisfied that to do so is necessary for the protection of members of the public or is in the interests of the registered person referred to inquiry, at any time renew, for a further period not exceeding six months, an order for interim suspension or for conditional registration."

(4) After subsection (4) there shall be inserted—

"(4A) An appeal shall lie to the court (within the meaning of section 38(7) of this Act) from any direction of the Preliminary Proceedings Committee given by virtue of subparagraphs (3)(b) and (c) above."

(5) In subsection (6), for the words "two months" there shall be substituted the words "six months".'.

The amendment deals with the second of two issues that we raised in Committee and to which the Government said that they wished to return on Report. We have just dealt with the first issue through amendment No. 1. I do not think that this second issue is contentious between the parties, although the Government may wish to produce a different draft as I understand that there are technical difficulties with drafting an amendment to achieve the purpose that lies behind our amendment.

The amendment deals with the issues referred to earlier by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe). Its purpose is to give the GMC preliminary proceedings committee the power to make orders for interim suspension for periods of up to six months and for renewal thereafter as necessary. That power is not currently available to the GMC.

Under the present powers conferred by the Medical Act 1983, periods of interim suspension and conditional registration can last for a maximum of only two months and they are not renewable. Therefore, it is possible for a medical practitioner to try to practise again if somebody will employ him. The GMC is aware of the problem. It published a consultation paper in February 1994, which made a powerful case for the proposal we have put before the House today. The GMC says that experience has shown that it may take longer than two months to arrange medical examinations of and reports on a doctor who is referred to the health committee.

A doctor may successfully apply for an adjournment of a forthcoming health or professional conduct hearing on a number of grounds, such as being hospitalised, family illness abroad, and so on. At present, it is possible for doctors under investigation to abuse the judicial arrangements and so escape interim suspension from the register while being investigated. That is clearly wrong. I note that the Secretary of State has said publicly that she wants to do something about the matter and our amendment provides the opportunity to do so. I do not expect there to be any difference between the Opposition and the Minister on this, and I await his comments with interest.

Mr. Sackville: As the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) said, the GMC already has the power to impose interim suspension or interim conditional registration, but only for a period of two months. It is generally agreed that, in current circumstances, that is not sufficient, as it usually takes rather longer to mount proceedings. The GMC has already consulted on the matter and has received a positive reaction to extending interim suspension from two months to six months. Further orders might extend the suspension for a further period.

We have considered the issue and we believe that the correct period would be three months. As a doctor's livelihood may be affected and no case has yet been proven, we agree that the doctor should have the right of appeal to the High Court—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend mean a total of three months suspension or three months renewable?

Mr. Sackville: My hon. Friend is right to raise that point. I am referring to renewable periods. Each time the GMC wished to continue a suspension, it would have to bring the practitioner concerned in front of the relevant committee. The GMC's existing power to impose interim conditions would be similarly extended and we welcome that.

The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East helpfully wrote to me last week urging the Government to expedite our consideration of the matter. We have had further discussions with the GMC, with other Departments and within the Department of Health to ensure that we get the detail of any amendment correct. I regret that it has been impossible to agree the detail of an amendment and to bring one forward within the time available.

We are concerned to get matters of policy correct, such as our judgment that there should be a six-month period, renewable for three months, in contrast with the Opposition's proposal for a renewable period of six months. The shorter period is in line with natural justice. It gives further protection to the doctor while at the same time ensuring that the GMC has an incentive to get on with proceedings and to bring the matter to a successful resolution.

I ask the hon. Gentleman to withdraw his amendment. I assure the House—and the hon. Gentleman in particular—that we will introduce a suitable amendment in another place to bring into law what the hon. Gentleman has sought through his amendment.

Mr. Alex Carlile: I have just one comment to make on the issue and it relates to the fact that the GMC is not a court made up of professional judges or of people who are paid to do the job. The GMC consists of elected and nominated members who are not remunerated at the professional rate for the work that they do. Therefore, to a great extent their work is voluntary.

Suggesting that we need to ensure that the GMC gets on with its job might imply that it is not diligent in so doing. The hon. Member for Chislehurst (Mr. Sims) is a fellow lay member of the GMC and it is a pleasure to see him in his place. I am sure that he shares my view that there is enormous pressure on members of GMC committees and that no criticism can fairly be levelled against them.

While there is a case to be made—and it has been well made on both sides of the House—to change the present arrangements to allow longer and renewable suspensions, I hope that the Minister recognises that the national health service has a part to play in ensuring that doctors who are not performing to the standard contractually required of them are, in appropriate circumstances, taken out of their jobs while proceedings are pending before GMC committees.

There is a woeful lack of information in the N. network. Often, a hospital has absolutely no idea that doctor is facing proceedings before the GMC. That is something which frustrates the GMC's committees—notably the professional conduct committee, on which I served for five years. It is valid to make a plea to the Minister to ensure, in the broad context, that information is networked around the different parts of the NHS so that, when a doctor applies for employment, it can be quickly ascertained whether he is the subject of a complaint to the GMC.

In the Gaud case—the notorious case of the surgeon who was responsible for the spreading of hepatitis B and who was subsequently imprisoned for a year by Southwark Crown court—it was evident from reports on the case that Mr. Gaud was employed at hospital after hospital despite the fact that he had already been dismissed from employment because of his hepatitis B condition. Indeed, in that case it would appear that quite senior consultants gave references for Mr. Gaud despite possibly one or more of them knowing of the hepatitis B condition. Such a situation should never arise.

Mr. Rowe: There have also been cases of the royal colleges and others giving oral statements—on the telephone—about not being happy at the prospect of working alongside a particular practitioner, but refusing to put those statements in writing when asked to do so. There is a whole area of uncertainty in the national health service which the hon. and learned Gentleman is rightly addressing.

Mr. Carlile: The hon. Gentleman is right. Indeed, I suggest that the way in which locum consultants in particular and locum associate specialists are employed simply does not bear examination. It is horrifying to think, but true to say, that they are sometimes employed as a result of a telephone call to a medical employment agency without any references being taken up at all. That is not the GMC's fault. The GMC is entirely blameless in such situations; it has no relevant powers. But the Government can take steps and I urge the Minister to consider what further steps are available in that context.

Mr. Sackville: On the first point made by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile), I would be the last to suggest that we wanted to put any undue pressure on the General Medical Council. I certainly agree that what it does is voluntary, for which we are very grateful. If there were any implication that bringing in a three-month rather than a six-month renewable power was in order to put pressure on the GMC, I would remind the hon. and learned Gentleman that I am informed that most cases can be dealt with within six months and that the proposal would deal with rather exceptional cases.

On the second point, and echoing what my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) said, clearly the national health service has to be very careful. It has to exchange intelligence on such matters and constantly watch out for doctors who—perhaps—should not be employed. I remind the House that any doctor who seeks to work as a doctor in contravention of a suspension—interim or otherwise—commits a criminal act and could be arrested and charged for it. I give the House the assurance that we shall be bringing forward a suitable amendment in another place to cover the matter.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: In fairness to the medical profession, it is only right to say that the amendment would, in any event, cover only a very small number of cases each year.

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

I am grateful to the Minister for his response. It did not take me by surprise because, as he correctly said, there has been a very satisfactory exchange of correspondence between us. Even if there had not been an exchange of correspondence, I could have read all about the matter yesterday in *The Mail on Sunday*, the campaigning newspaper that gets results. It carried a rather ferocious looking picture of the Secretary of State under the headline "Grateful". I assume that that means that she is grateful to the parliamentary Labour party for tabling the amendment and for pressing the Government on this matter.

The important point is not that the period of suspension be for six months and renewable as necessary, as the Opposition's amendment proposes. I have no quarrel with the Government's proposition for a six-month suspension, renewable for three-month periods again and again if necessary. The important point is that there is a power for interim suspension and that it is renewable. If the Government wish to come forward in another place with something containing those principles, drafted in a way that is satisfactory to them and to the parliamentary draftsmen, it would be the right way to proceed.

I am grateful to the Minister for his remarks and assurances, and I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Order for Third Reading read.

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Bill be now read the Third time.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

7.14 pm

Mr. Sackville: This Bill will, by general agreement, fill what is seen as a serious gap in the General Medical Council's fitness to practise procedures, which was first identified by the council itself. We have been pleased to be able to provide legislative time and support for the Bill. The Bill will add to the existing disciplinary powers of the GMC. It will enable it for the time to address allegations that a doctor's standard of professional performance is seriously deficient. It will assist the GMC's key purpose of ensuring that only doctors who are fit to practise remain on the medical register. It will further strengthen quality of service and patient safety, while providing a clear indication to members of the profession of what is expected of them.

I express my appreciation of the cross-party agreement and for the assistance of various hon. Members of all parties during the passage of the Bill. I would also like to use this opportunity to congratulate Sir Robert Kilpatrick on his six and a half years as president of the GMC. He is soon to step down. During his time as president, through his great personal virtues and commitment, I am sure that he increased the standing of the profession as a self-regulating body. He has also managed to guide the GMC towards a better balance between the protection of the public and the protection of the rights of medical practitioners. I am, therefore, very happy to commend the Bill to the House as a fitting tribute to Sir Robert's excellent presidency of the General Medical Council.

7.17 pm

Mr. Alex Carlile: May I first echo the words of the Minister about the retiring president of the General Medical Council, Sir Robert Kilpatrick? He is a man who can best be described as having an excellent bedside manner. He has led the GMC with kindly and courteous consideration throughout his period of office. He is being succeeded by an extremely fine and worthy successor, who I am sure will help the GMC to continue to move forward. Sir Donald Irvine will be the first general practitioner to become president of the General Medical Council. Those of us who know him well—even those who have met him only briefly—quickly discovered his qualities of leadership and his articulate presentation of medical matters.

When I joined the GMC, I was surprised to discover what a hard-working and determined organisation it was. I had misgivings about such a self-regulating body dealing with the registration of doctors, the disciplining of them and all matters connected with it. After serving on the GMC for about six years, I believe that it does its job rigorously and protects the public extremely well. As the Minister said, the impetus for the Bill came not from the Government or the Opposition, but from the GMC itself. The fact that the GMC is prepared to look for improvements in the law and in its procedure speaks volumes in evidence of the council's determination.

I welcome the Bill. The GMC is grateful that the Government gave time for it. There are other issues on which the GMC has asked for legislative time, some of them are complex and relate to difficulties involving registration and training. I hope that time will be found at least as readily for those issues as for the subject before us.

7.20 pm

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): I must apologise for the fact that I was unable to attend the Second Reading debate. I was abroad with the Select Committee for Trade and Industry at the time.

My interest in the subject stems from 10 years ago and the tragic death of a young lady called Harriet English, the daughter of my friend and agent in my constituency, Richard English and his wife Ann. I raised the subject of her case on two occasions in the House, the second of which was 25 March 1986.

Harriet English was a young lady of 22 who was a perfectly fit and athletic girl. She felt tired after playing badminton and engaging in other exercise, and complained of a pain in her shoulder. Her general practitioner, Dr. Barretto, was consulted and diagnosed a torn ligament and administered an injection of cortisone. He made no other inquiries. Harriet was similarly treated by his partners, Dr. Ryan and Dr. Page. Sadly, four days later she was rushed to the London clinic in agonising circumstances and died of septicemia which had not previously been diagnosed.

There was a great case before the GMC on 18 March 1986 and various experts and counsel were engaged on both sides. One expert, Dr. Martin Wood, attested that Harriet's symptoms should have alerted Dr. Barretto to the fact that she was suffering from something more than a torn ligament. The GMC's finding, from which there was no appeal except on a point of law to the Privy Council, was that serious professional misconduct was not proved, so the doctors were cleared. Nevertheless, as I

told the House then, the case left unanswered questions of competence and acceptability of conduct. But no alternative charge was available under the Medical Act 1983.

I worked closely with the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing), who had many similar cases, and was a sponsor of the private legislation that he sought to bring before the House. Therefore, I welcome the Bill before us as it seeks to rectify, as the Secretary of State said on Second Reading, the fact that, with regard to serious misconduct,

"no such powers exist to deal with doctors whose performance may be seriously deficient but who, nevertheless, fall short of those extremes."

That is precisely what happened in the case that I have mentioned.

As I said in the House in 1986, the law as it stood was rather as if the only motoring offence was the charge of dangerous driving, and there was no offence of careless driving, the lesser offence—or as if someone could be charged only of murder, not manslaughter. I said in 1986 that I thought that that was ridiculous and I welcome the change that is being made.

The Secretary of State, to whom the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile) paid tribute, said:

"The Bill plugs the gap . . . the initiative came from the GMC."—[*Official Report*, 25 April 1995; Vol. 258, c. 673.]

The right hon. Lady might perhaps have added that the GMC was chivvied to a great extent by the hon. Member for Newham, South and, to a lesser extent, by myself, as well as by the hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith). The GMC was galvanised into taking action by the tragic cases that hon. Members brought to the House.

Can I be absolutely assured that the Bill covers cases such as that of Harriet English? I have read the Committee reports and the full effect of clause 1, and the phrase "seriously deficient" is not entirely clear. I am not certain from the Committee report precisely what triggers the new procedure.

I believe that the Bill improves the law and I strongly support that improvement. I am sure that careful scrutiny in another place where there are more distinguished doctors than in this place—*[Interruption.]* With certain most notable exceptions—*[Interruption.]* If I have to make more exceptions, I shall have to excuse every Member of the House. There are other distinguished people in another place who will no doubt rectify, as they always do, any little errors or lacunae in the Bill.

I want to be certain that the Bill will prevent tragic cases such as that of my constituents. Richard and Ann English know that nothing can bring back their beloved daughter, but they are anxious, as I am, that others should not suffer her tragic fate.

7.24 pm

Mr. David Congdon (Croydon, North-East): I welcome the Bill. I was able to speak on Second Reading and I noted with interest in the Committee proceedings that the fact that I spoke on Second Reading seemed to have been picked up by the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing). I was flattered that the north-east Croydon question was referred to, especially as the point that I raised was based on an original point made some years ago by the hon. Member for Newham, South. He did so in the context of a child in his constituency who died from meningitis when a doctor refused to go and see the child. The case, although proven, was not found to amount to serious professional misconduct. I have always viewed the Bill as an attempt to remedy that gap or defect in existing procedures.

I, too, read the reports of the Standing Committee. The reports were of some length and my impression was that, in response to probing by the hon. Member for Newham, South, my hon. Friend the Minister was able to confirm that the procedures could be triggered by a single incident. That is important, because it is possible to conceive of circumstances where a doctor's single act does not constitute serious professional misconduct, is not part of a pattern or a number of repeated occurrences, but most reasonable people might say that it was not good enough and something should be done about it.

I hope that my interpretation of the reports of the Standing Committee can be confirmed. It is important that we do not find ourselves a few years hence discovering that the cases that today we thought would be dealt with by the Bill are not covered.

Apart from those minor reservations, I am pleased to support the Bill's Third Reading.

7.27 pm

Mr. Nicholas Brown: I support the Bill's Third Reading. The Bill came before the House with all-party agreement. My right hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) promised during the debate on the Queen's Speech that the Bill would have a fair wind through the House from the Opposition. We made informal representations to the Government stating that we would be happy with a Second Reading Committee rather than a half-day's debate on the Floor of the House.

It was the Government who sought the full day's debate on the Floor of the House, which, towards the end, became repetitive although well-informed, largely because people were reading from the Library note, which had been well prepared. Like other hon. Members, I pay tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) and for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Galbraith) who raised the issue and attempted to introduce their own legislation prior to the Bill before us.

The Bill increases the powers of the General Medical Council, the medical regulatory body. It enables it to take action against doctors whose professional performance has become seriously deficient. It represents a third procedure that is now open to the GMC. It already has powers to take action when a doctor's fitness to practice is called into question by virtue of first, serious professional misconduct or, secondly, ill health. The Bill proposes a third procedure.

The action that the GMC will be able to take ranges from ordering registration to be dependent on the doctor in question undergoing a course of retraining, to ordering indefinite suspension from the register. The Bill also makes provision for doctors to remove themselves voluntarily from the General Medical Council register.

While I welcome the Bill, there are three points that I should like to raise. They in no way undermine my support for the Bill, but they are matters that I believe remain outstanding. Concerns were expressed in Committee that the new powers of voluntary removal from the register might allow doctors who are undergoing

[Mr. Nicholas Brown]

investigation for serious professional misconduct to escape sanction; in other words, that doctors could voluntarily remove themselves from the register before an inquiry caught up with them.

It is important to consider patients who have been adversely affected by such doctors. The victims of a medical practitioner are unlikely to be satisfied if they feel that the doctor has somehow escaped punishment for his misconduct. It is important that justice is done and that those who have suffered feel that justice has been done. It is very important that the procedures do not allow the rare, errant medical practitioner to get off the hook.

Secondly, the Bill proposes that hearings under the new performance procedures will be held in private, at least for the first two years. The Secretary of State made reference to that on Second Reading. It was clear from what she said that her mind was not closed to reconsidering the issue after we have seen how the procedures that we are putting in place today work in practice.

There is an anomaly in the Bill at present. It allows for public hearings at the request of the doctor but not at the request of the complainant. The objection to public hearings clearly does not concern the principle, but who can call for them. If a doctor can ask for a public hearing, it is surely right that the complainant can. That is not an anomaly that destroys the thrust of the Bill, but it is one that we might want to reconsider when we see how the procedures work in practice.

Thirdly, the GMC will be able to postpone investigation of a doctor if related investigations by other bodies are already under way. I understand that that is probably a good—even a necessary—idea if a criminal investigation is under way but surely cases in which criminal investigations are running alongside investigations by the GMC are rare.

It is not immediately obvious why investigations by, say, an employer should lead the GMC to suspend its investigations until the employer's investigations have been completed. That seems to me to be particularly true of the new procedures, which, of course, are intended to be not disciplinary but remedial procedures. It is my view that the GMC should be able to get its investigations under way when it believes it to be appropriate and also at the earliest possible time. I accept the point in respect of criminal investigations but not of other investigations. Delay will undermine the procedures and is therefore to be avoided unless it is absolutely necessary.

Having made those three relatively minor qualifications, on behalf of the Opposition I give the Bill a welcome and wish it a speedy passage into law.

7.33 pm

Mr. Sackville: I shall touch briefly on the points made by my hon. Friends the Members for Croydon, North-East (Mr. Congdon) and for Cambridgeshire, South-West (Sir A. Grant) about triggers and what sort of cases could become subject to these procedures.

Any information about a single case or several cases which would give rise to the suspicion that there was a serious deficiency of professional performance would fall under these procedures. Any departure from good medical practice, whether covered by GMC guidance or not, sufficient to call into question the doctor's registration, that is to say his or her fitness to practise, would fall under the procedures.

The General Medical Council, under these procedures, has to look for a pattern of seriously deficient performance but a single case may be sufficient to trigger the investigation under the new procedures.

On the matter of locums and the need for the NHS to be vigilant, a report of the locums working group, inspired by my hon. Friend the Minister for Health, is now out for consultation. That may address many of the concerns raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) and by the hon. and learned Member for Montgomery (Mr. Carlile).

With that, I join the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, East (Mr. Brown) in welcoming the Bill and commending it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW (MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS) BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 90(6), That the Bill be read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 61 (Committal of Bills).

SCOTTISH GRAND COMMITTEE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order 94H(1) (Scottish Grand Committee (sittings)),

That the Order of the House [30th March] relating to Scottish Grand Committee (sittings) shall have effect with the following modification, namely, that for paragraph (4) there shall be substituted—

'(4) in the Aberdeen Town and County Hall on Monday 23rd October at half-past Ten o'clock to consider a substantive Motion for the adjournment of the Committee'.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

Question agreed to.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

VALUE ADDED TAX

That the Value Added Tax (Input Tax) (Amendment) (No. 2) Order 1995 (S.I., 1995, No. 1267), dated 10th May 1995, a copy of which was laid before this House on 10th May, be approved.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

Question agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): With permission, I shall put together the next two motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

NORTHERN IRELAND

That the draft Armagh Observatory and Planetarium (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 16th May, be approved.

That the draft Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 16th May, be approved.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

CONSUMER PROTECTION: UNIT PRICING

That this House takes note of European Community Document No. 4069/95, relating to price indications, and supports the Government's view that the draft Directive should be adopted.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

Question agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We now come to motion No. 9. I see that it is not moved.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I seek your guidance. There has been an objection to motion No. 9 on the Order Paper. As one of the proposed members of that Committee—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. The motion was not moved.

Mr. Duncan Smith: My point of order concerns what happens next, Madam Deputy Speaker. The point is simply that we have to resolve the matter. If these objections go on for ever, the Committee will never meet and the public will want to know why. Cannot the usual channels resolve it?

Madam Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for the Chair; it is a matter for the Government to decide when they can bring forward such a motion. Private matters between the usual channels are not for the Chair.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Has it not been an instruction of the House that the Committee should report by a certain date? Bearing that in mind, does not the Chair have some responsibility to the Chamber, which has already taken its decision on the matter?

Madam Deputy Speaker: No, it is not a matter for the Chair. It is a matter for the Government as to when they may bring forward another motion.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. When could the Government bring forward such a motion, given the anxiety on both sides of the House to clear up the matter?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I have already dealt with the matter as it affects the Chair. I do not intend to take any more points of order on it.

City Hospital, Birmingham

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

7.38 pm

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): I rise surprisingly early this evening to ask the Minister, on behalf of people of all political persuasions in Birmingham, to tell us the truth, on the record in the House of Commons, about the plans for the future of City hospital, formerly and more widely known as Dudley Road hospital. The issue is causing enormous concern across the city and it comes after a period of enormous turbulence and change in hospital provision in the city. We in Birmingham have been lied to systematically before. There is now grave doubt, including in the local newspapers, about whether we can believe any of the things that we have been told in the past couple of weeks.

I became a Member of Parliament in 1983. The Birmingham children's hospital and the then accident hospital, which was of international renown for its burns treatment, were both due to be rebuilt; we were firmly promised that. There was then a new plan to build a healthy Birmingham and to build a series of new hospital provision on the Queen Elizabeth site. That caused enormous arguments in Birmingham, because people were worried that, if all the provision was centred in one place, people from other parts of the city would not be able to get to it. All those plans were then scrapped. The accident hospital was closed and moved into general hospital which, in turn, was closed. Children's hospital is now not getting a new building, but has been moved into the general hospital.

General hospital is a city-centre hospital. People were deeply worried—my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) was involved in the campaign to save general hospital—because it was the big hospital that served the city centre. There was terrible concern that if it closed and if there were big accidents in the city centre, there would be no way in which the people of Birmingham could be cared for. We were told repeatedly—*[Interruption.]* I would be grateful if the Minister would listen to this point because it is of enormous concern to the people of Birmingham. I see that he is talking and not listening.

We were told repeatedly that the people of Birmingham should not worry because Dudley Road hospital, now known as City hospital, was expanding as a district hospital, would have a large accident and emergency department and could provide for any crisis or tragedy that might take place in the city centre.

Dudley Road hospital is a much-loved, high-quality hospital that serves an enormously poor community, as well as having accident and emergency provision that serves the city centre. According to Department of Health statistics, the community is the fourth poorest in Britain. Yet the hospital is of such high quality that royal college examinations take place there. It is a teaching hospital, and the quality of many of its services is outstanding on a national scale.

The Minister should know that there is a deep ethos of public service at the hospital. Very high-quality staff come to work in the hospital and tend to stay there for a long period because they want to give a service to a needy

[Ms Clare Short]

community. It is notable that the consultants at the hospital do not make large amounts by working in private practice; they continue to work at the hospital because their sense of public service is deeper than their desire to make extra money on the side.

I have described the background of the loss of a whole succession of hospitals in Birmingham, which caused consternation across the city. We then settled down with the new reorganisation. City hospital became a trust and the 3,000 staff who worked there were determined to ensure that the hospital succeeded. In the past, there had been trouble about the hospital's budget, partly because of the Government's funding formula for hospitals. This matter was raised at meetings with the region and meetings with the Secretary of State. The formula for distributing funds, quite reasonably, provides for extra funds where there is a large elderly population because elderly people tend to be big users of the health service. However, in some of the poorest communities, the formula does not serve well because people live less long.

The hospital has had difficulties over the funding formula on a number of occasions. We have been given assurances on a number of occasions, including at meetings with the Secretary of State for Health, that adjustments would be made and that hospitals such as City hospital would not lose out under a formula that was triggered by having large numbers of elderly people because of the great poverty in the area.

Everyone worked enormously hard because there had been crises about money before and they worked with enormous success. In the past year, the throughput in the hospital has increased considerably. People were content and working hard. All the people who worked in the hospital were united and determined that the hospital would continue to succeed after the period of instability in Birmingham.

Out of the blue came an enormous shock. On 10 May in *The Birmingham Post*, there was a story that the maternity unit at City hospital might face the axe and that there was to be a major reorganisation of the hospital, probably with large numbers of redundancies. There was a real crisis, because North Birmingham health authority was unable to pay for the increased numbers of emergencies treated at the hospital.

It is inconceivable that the maternity unit at Dudley Road hospital should be axed. I was born there and, more significantly, many children are born there now. It is a big, successful, high-quality maternity unit in a needy community. The west midlands has a worryingly high rate of infant mortality, which is connected to poverty. The unit is an expert, high-quality one, yet we have been told out of the blue that after a year of success and increased throughput, the maternity unit faces cuts in funding and redundancies. One can imagine the worries that this has caused in the city.

On 16 May, my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr, having followed up the story, received a letter from the chief executive of City hospital suggesting that the hospital's future might be as a sort of cottage hospital in the town. This terrified us all, and the sense of consternation across the city grew; I do not exaggerate. The *Birmingham Evening Mail*, the evening paper that is read throughout the city, started a campaign, for which we are all enormously grateful. We are united in our admiration for the newspaper at present. That is not always the case among politicians in the city, especially as the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) chairs its board. Some Labour Members think that that is a little odd. None the less, on this issue there is no question.

The paper started a campaign called, "We are watching you every step you take", "you" meaning the Government and the regional health executive. It is determined to find out what is going on and it has said clearly—this is the spirit of the city—that it is not prepared to see another hospital go. With the closure of the general hospital, this hospital is crucial to cover the accident and emergency needs of the city centre. There was consternation all round at the suggestion that we would lose the hospital and have a tiny replacement hospital. I tell the Minister that the present hospital is on an enormously large site. There has always been a suspicion that there might be the ulterior motive of selling a lot of the land. That is part of the fear.

On 18 May, an exclusive report in *The Birmingham Post*, the morning paper, said out of the blue—no one, including consultants, trade unions, Members of Parliament and people in the city had heard of this—that we were to get a £100 million new hospital on the City hospital site. We were all deeply sceptical and suspicious. We thought that this was all about a hidden agenda to close Dudley Road hospital. How one minute could people be talking about cuts and getting rid of the maternity unit and the next minute saying that £100 million, which no one had heard of, was available? We had heard the rumours about there being a tiny cottage hospital on the site of the massive district hospital. We were all deeply suspicious, and those suspicions were voiced by everyone, including our local evening paper.

The chief executive of the West Midlands health authority was extremely angry. He suggested that people should not mistrust his word, and that we should be grateful for the suggestion that we should have a new hospital. What happened then? There was a further leak of minutes of dinners—not meetings, but dinners—of the West Midlands health authority executive and of dinners of the trust that controls the City hospital suggesting that there would be an extremely small hospital with some beds. There would be an accident and emergency function, but the rest of the provision would be for walking patients who would be treated and go home that evening. The local evening paper felt vindicated. Of course we were right to be suspicious. The announcement of the unheard-of £100 million hospital seemed to be a smokescreen and an excuse for closing City hospital.

I want some firm and clear answers from the Minister. He has had plenty of notice of this debate and I am sure that he has been fully briefed about the depth and extent of suspicion and fear in Birmingham. Everyone will read his words with enormous attention, and I hope that he will give us some clear answers.

Was there or is there a plan for a new hospital on the site? If so, when was the plan drawn up, and is there a budget? Will the primary role of the planned hospital be ambulatory care and a day treatment centre? There may be some beds because of the accident and emergency function, but there is an assumption that there will be a substantial reduction in emergency medical admissions. Rather than the current practice of admitting patients for 24-hour stays, they would be assessed, have their treatment prescribed and be discharged to the care of their

GP. Is that the sort of hospital that is planned? Is the plan for a hospital of the same size as the existing City hospital, or will there be a greatly reduced hospital?

Are other hospitals in Birmingham facing similar plans? Is only City hospital to be downsized? Has City hospital been picked for a national experiment? That was the suggestion in a letter received by my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr, which seemed to describe a new kind of hospital with no beds and in which people are treated overnight and sent home. If so, will the Minister explain why one of the poorest communities in this country has been chosen for that experiment?

Surely it would be better to choose an area in which people have good housing, warm homes, high-quality food and support and relatives to care for them for that experiment. It is inconceivable that anyone serious about health planning would carry out such an experiment—if it is desirable at all—in such a poor community. I should like to hear the Minister's comments on that proposition.

Why has City hospital been singled out for the experiment? I suggest to the Minister that the reason might be the inability to pay for services provided at City hospital. That goes back to the funding formula, which gives too little money for our part of the city. It is a poor and needy community in which people do not live as long. Therefore, the entitlement which comes from an area having a large number of elderly people is not triggered.

I think that the scheme is market-driven. The money is running out, and that is why the plans are changing weekly and monthly. A mad new idea has come up for a cottage hospital service for a very needy area. The Rowntree reports have clearly demonstrated the growing inequality in this country, and with increasing poverty goes increasing ill-health. In poorer areas, there is more sickness and ill-health, and there is an enhanced need for money for medical treatment.

Primary care is not well developed in west Birmingham. If there is to be an experiment, surely an area should be chosen that has high-quality primary care. If people are to be sent home immediately, high-quality GPs and community nurses must be available to care for them.

Is it true that fundholders in the west midlands have a £40 million surplus this year? If so, and I believe that it is, that is an outrage. The crisis has been triggered by a shortfall of £4 million, which was caused by the hospital being so successful in increasing its throughput. The mad market experiment in which the Government are engaged means that fundholders have £40 million that they do not need. A crisis is being faced by the people of Birmingham as a consequence of the mad experiment in commercial forces in which the Government are engaged.

I understand that the west midlands was the only region in the country that chose a nine-month waiting list initiative instead of a 12-month one. Where did that money come from, and where did it go? Is it not more important to pay the bills for City hospital and to keep it going? Is it not true that the money is increasingly in the wrong places, and that the most needy are experiencing worse health care?

I suggest to the Minister that City hospital is an inappropriate setting for the experiment of a cottage hospital in the middle of a city. I understand from our local newspaper that the £4 million missing for this year has been settled, but I want an undertaking that it will be settled for longer than this year. We met the Secretary of State for Health, who promised us that she would attend to the funding formula problem. But it is not good enough to provide £4 million for this year and then say that there will be a crisis next year.

That hospital needs stability, and all concerned want to know where things stand. A group of GPs and hospital doctors are currently going through every service that the hospital provides, looking at all modern developments and making sure that we plan for the future. We must make sure that we have proper provision for the people of west Birmingham. We are not against change, but we want decent services for the people whom we represent.

We do not need this new hospital. We are being conned. I was born in Dudley Road hospital, and my family has been cared for there throughout our lives. I have been in and out of the hospital throughout my life. It is a big old Victorian hospital in large grounds. Of course it needs some attention here and some further work there, but all sorts of building developments are taking place on the site. It is not falling apart, but out of the blue we were told that the hospital was to be pulled down and some tiny cottage hospital built.

I am told that there are strange capital charges in the funding formula. Is there some distortion in the formula that means that a large old hospital—no matter how adequate, warm and well maintained—is somehow more costly, and therefore must be got rid of?

I very much hope that the Minister will give some adequate answers tonight. Everyone in Birmingham will be watching the Minister, with the help of our newspapers. If he, his Administration and the regional executive carry on their threats, we will cause so much fuss, agitation and protest in the city that he and they will regret that they ever dared to try to close or replace City hospital.

7.56 pm

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr) *rose—*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. Before I call the hon. Gentleman, I must be clear that he has the sanction of both the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) and the Minister.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville) *indicated assent.*

Ms Short *indicated assent.*

Mr. Rooker: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) for allowing me to participate in this Adjournment debate, and I hope that my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) may also be allowed to take part. We have been lucky—it is the first bit of luck that City hospital has had—to have extended time for this debate, and we should make good use of it.

I do not want to be repetitious. The Minister will be the most famous man in Birmingham tomorrow, because all his words will be read. The people in the city are aware of my views and of those of my hon. Friends, but they will want to know the Minister's views.

City hospital served the old West Birmingham health authority which—before the amalgamation last year—consisted of the four wards in my constituency, all the

[Mr. Rooker]

constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood and one ward in the constituency of Small Heath. West Birmingham health authority's calculations and reports from the former director of public health—all of which have been published—show that it is the most unhealthy part of England in which to live. A whole series of indicators—early death rates among adults, suicides, accidents in the home, perinatal mortality rates and low birth weight babies—confirm that.

We need a good hospital and better primary health care. We are debating a part of Birmingham that is not wealthy and is unhealthy: that point must be taken on board. Since the trusts were formed and the current spate of reorganisation, there has not been as much contact between those who run the health authorities and Members of Parliament as there was previously. We have had crisis meetings in the past, and we have certainly had such meetings in the past few weeks. There has been no full and frank exchange of views and thoughts.

That may be because those currently involved in health planning in Birmingham know what happened in the days of Sir James Acker's reign at the West Midlands regional health authority, when there was one plan after another for Birmingham and we went to one Secretary of State after another. The consensus among my hon. Friends was that, by and large, we had been conned regarding the proposed hospital closures and other changes in health care. The good times that we were promised have not arrived. Therefore, we are bound to be a little sceptical and, for that reason, the current health planners have decided not to talk to Members of Parliament.

However, rumours were rife around the city. They could not be pinned down. The regional chief executive said that he did not know the origins of the idea that there were one too many hospitals in Birmingham. At meetings that I attended in the last decade to discuss health planning issues in Birmingham—right back to when we devised the "Plan for a Healthy Birmingham"—we were told that, according to population changes and new modern medical techniques, Birmingham had one hospital too many.

We were never told which hospital it was, and general hospital was framed for closure. It was not a fully fledged district general hospital. It was located in the city centre, but it was not a large hospital—I do not think that it ever had more than 400 beds and three operating theatres. Unlike my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood, I was born at the former maternity hospital in Loveday street, which is attached to general hospital.

When the city centre hospital ceased functioning as a mini district general hospital—it serves various other purposes today—we were told that modern health techniques in hospitals required the construction of large district general hospitals in order to deal with all complications that might arise as a consequence of patient treatment. We said at the time that the hospital was useful for dealing with accidents and emergencies because of its proximity to the city centre and that it was very easy to reach.

We were then told that Dudley Road hospital was a city centre hospital. The authorities were very clever to change its name to City hospital, because that gives people outside Birmingham the impression that it is located in the city centre. As a Brummie, I would not describe Dudley Road hospital as a city centre hospital. Many of my constituents have difficulty reaching it, and it is their district general hospital. It is sometimes easier for them to travel to Sandwell hospital or to Good Hope hospital in Sutton Coldfield.

Over the years, we got the impression that the planners wanted to close one hospital in Birmingham, but we could not tell which one it would be, as building work was under way almost constantly at Dudley Road hospital, Good Hope hospital, East Birmingham hospital—which was renamed Heartlands—as well as at the Selly Oak and Queen Elizabeth hospitals. It was extremely difficult to forecast what would happen.

After a period of quiet and lack of discussion, it appears that Dudley Road hospital is to close—notwithstanding the fact that the maternity hospital is located there and that the new eye hospital is being built on that site. I have no complaints about the fact that there is to be a bedless hospital. I think that some of the headlines about that have been unfair, bearing in mind that it will be situated next to an 850-bed district general hospital. However, if an 850-bed district general hospital is not located next to the new eye hospital, we will have a problem. The Minister must be made aware of that.

The current eye hospital in the city centre has been closed many times for health reasons and its current lease is about to expire. Hence, a new eye hospital is to be built on the Dudley Road site. I do not know whether the Minister has visited the Dudley Road hospital.

Mr. Sackville *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Rooker: I hope that he will visit it soon. When he does, he will see that a large part of the site has been cleared recently. Many of the oldest parts of the Dudley Road site—which are more than 100 years old—have been demolished. Part of the site was the old workhouse. However, the entrance to that former workhouse has been retained as it is a listed building and therefore cannot be demolished. A great monolith representing part of Birmingham's history remains while the rest of the area has been demolished.

A district general hospital containing 850 beds is not a large district general hospital; it is a modest hospital. We are now very short of emergency beds in Birmingham. No one in his right mind wants disasters to occur, but it is the responsibility of all those involved in political life to plan for the future. If people turn on a power switch and the lights do not come on, they will not thank us when we say, "Sorry, we did not build enough power stations." Similarly, if there is a rail or aircraft disaster, we cannot say, "Sorry, we got rid of the spare hospital beds on the orders of the accountants."

Last week I asked what would happen if a 747 crashed in Birmingham. Many senior people replied that not many people would be injured. That is not the right way to approach the issue. It is no use saying that the health service will stop and that we will get on the telephone and locate empty beds. If we reduce the number of beds available at Dudley Road—whether or not the hospital is rebuilt—we are courting full-scale disaster in Birmingham.

My noble Friend Lord Howell of Aston Manor, a former Member of this place, recently waited 12 hours for a bed on the day before his operation was to take place. He asked for nothing more than his rights as a patient of the national health service. He had gone to that hospital

all his life, yet he had to wait 12 hours for a bed in order to undergo an operation the next day. He experienced the problems at that hospital at first hand.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood mentioned the current spate of rumours surrounding the fate of the hospital. There was a press report about the possible closure of the Dudley Road maternity hospital, and before the most serious rumours took off, I was contacted by doctors from the Laurie Pike health centre—formerly the Birchfield medical centre—in my constituency. It is a world-class local primary health care general practitioner practice. Doctors who want to learn how to run a good practice with their own researchers and who wish to get out into the community practise in that centre. I once sent the former Home Secretary, the present Foreign Secretary, to that centre to learn what was happening in inner-city health care. I told him to talk to the doctors rather than to the self-appointed community leaders.

The doctors in that centre wrote to me saying:

"We are GPs in the Laurie Pike Health Centre caring for patients in Perry Barr, Aston, Handsworth and surrounding areas for which the City Hospital, Dudley Road is the main provider of secondary and maternity care.

We are deeply concerned about the implications of the proposed closure of the maternity and possibly other departments at the City Hospital. This would seriously affect the care of our patients and indeed all those in the catchment area.

It would not only be difficult, particularly for pregnant patients to travel to the Maternity Hospital or Good Hope but we do not consider that they would receive comparable care".

The press reports about that proposed closure were worrying enough, but on VE day, as I sat in the cathedral an hour before the start of the commemorative service, two people approached me within half an hour of each other to ask whether I had heard rumours about the possible bulldozing of Dudley Road hospital. I had not heard those rumours before that day.

I then wrote a letter of no more than 50 words to the chief executive asking him to comment on the press reports about the closure of the maternity hospital and about the rumour that I had heard. The rest is history. The chief executive, Mr. Tarver, replied to me by letter. I understand that he has been ill recently and I wish him a speedy return to health. He has served West Birmingham health authority and the City hospital trust with distinction. He wrote me a frank letter in which he answered my questions and commented upon the rumours. I was horrified: it was the first I had heard of town hospitals. The new concept involved bulldozing district general hospitals and replacing them with small town hospitals located in the suburbs.

I am in favour of small town hospitals as a complement to district general hospitals, but not as an alternative to them. My constituency suffers from the lack of good-quality health centres where minor operations may be performed and where localised aftercare could be provided in the community prior to patients returning home. Small town hospitals should not be an alternative to the City hospital and the work that it does.

I was concerned about that proposal, and I made Mr. Tarver's letter public. I asked the medical journalist at the *Birmingham Evening Mail*, Mr. Derek Weekes, to investigate the matter. I am 100 miles away for four days every week and he was able to speak to many people. My hon. Friend has quite rightly paid tribute to the *Birmingham Evening Mail* for its excellence in reporting general health-care issues and the NHS in Birmingham. Its reporting of those issues was of a high quality before the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) took control of the company, and the newspaper has maintained that standard ever since. It is to the credit of the editor and journalists concerned.

The staff at the hospital asked the management whether they could have a copy of the letter that Mr. Tarver had sent me. They were refused, because of all the complicated questions that I had asked. I had written a 50-word letter enclosing a newspaper cutting about the possible closure of the maternity unit and asking for comments on what I had heard in the cathedral on VE Day. I did not ask a series of detailed questions. I have done so since, but it is obvious that there was less than openness with the staff. That is the root cause of the problem.

If the Minister wants to get a grip on the matter and stop what has become a public relations disaster for health service management in the west midlands, and consequently the Government, the one sure way to do it is by total openness. It is only a few weeks since the new code of open practice in the health service was launched by the Secretary of State.

I take no joy in the matter. What has happened in Birmingham is tragic. It is causing consternation among our constituents as GPs, patients and families of patients. It is totally unnecessary and it can be cured only by openness in thinking and sharing thoughts about health service planning with consultants, GPs and hospital staff. It is not happening because of money, accountants and budgets. One hospital has been set against another because of the market. That is the difficulty, and the Minister is the only person who can do anything about it.

I look forward to hearing his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood about the proposed £100 million hospital. Mr. Edwards, the regional director of the NHS, wrote to me on 23 May. His letter consisted of three sentences, each a paragraph. The middle one was:

"Do you want a new hospital or not?".

Frankly, no one had ever offered a new hospital. My answer is that I am not sure, for the following reason. There is no question about the site being large. It is bordered by main roads and the canal. It is not far from the prison. Where would the new hospital go? Would the present one be knocked down to clear the site for a new one? Would the new one be built somewhere else while the present hospital is operating 850 beds?

Someone has to answer some practical questions about putting another hospital on the site. Even with modern building techniques, there is no room to put another hospital of the same size on the site while maintaining the existing provision. The idea that the hospital at Dudley Road could be knocked down and everyone squeezed into all the other hospitals in Birmingham, if accepted, would be the final nail in the coffin. It would get rid of the spare hospital in Birmingham because, on the evidence of the past 10 years, I do not believe that a new one would ever be built once the site was cleared. That is a real problem.

Openness has to be the way forward. That openness has to include the meetings of the health authority and the trust. *The Birmingham Post* did some work on that issue. There were five meetings concerning Birmingham health service trusts and authorities, all behind closed doors. The journalists went to an open session and found that

[Mr. Rooker]

members of the authorities were not asking questions. It has been left to Members of Parliament and *The Birmingham Post* to ask some key questions of those in charge of the health service.

It is not always easy to find out who is in charge of the health service. The way in which it has been reorganised means that accountability has been diffused, spread and blurred. That in itself causes difficulty; therefore, sometimes we have to reach for our press pack or press six-gun. We cannot get the answers because we cannot find out who is accountable. It is all part of the consequences of constant reorganisation and lack of accountability.

There is also considerable lack of accountability in the House, as the Minister will make it clear that it has nothing to do with him—it is the trust for this, the trust for that, with this authority or that authority making the decisions. That is not good enough. We want some accountability in the House of Commons for a public service that is supported and loved by the vast majority of people in Britain.

I will not repeat what my hon. Friend the Member for Ladywood has said. I hope that the Minister will answer the questions and make the position absolutely clear so that it cannot be misunderstood by anyone, even by the most malicious of the Government's political opponents.

I am not seeking to make party political capital out of the issue. I want the truth for my constituents and the citizens of Birmingham, but I cannot secure that if the Minister and the health service are not open with me. If I feel that they are not being open and that I am being misled, I shall use arguments that border on a political attack as they are my only weapons as a Member of Parliament.

I should rather satisfy my constituents and the doctors that we shall maintain quality health care at City hospital, with progress and advancement. Nobody wants to ossify what we have; we want to advance on a range of issues.

It has been an unfortunate three or four weeks for the health service in west Birmingham, the knock-on effects of which have affected the rest of the city. That has done the health service no good, the Government much damage and, above all, has given my constituents some unnecessary sleepless nights.

I shall not recite individual cases, but I have been deluged with letters from constituents complaining to me about occurrences in the past few months that they thought they could put up with, but they now realise how much pressure the staff have been under at Dudley Road. The hospital has treated 13 per cent. more patients in the past year. That is part of the reason for the present financial difficulty. I consider 13 per cent. more patients to be a success. The hospital should not be penalised because of the way in which the Government organise health service finances.

I look forward to hearing what my hon. Friends have to say and the Minister's detailed response to the debate.

8.16 pm

Mr. Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield): With the permission of the House, I shall make a short contribution to the debate. A few weeks, ago I left the House early. I went back to my constituency on a Thursday to find an article in the newspaper that day talking about a £100 million investment in City hospital. I was not aware of the correspondence that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) had with City hospital. I was suddenly confronted with the news of a £100 million investment and I was asked for my reaction. My initial reaction was that I wanted to look at the fine print and I was rather sceptical.

In Birmingham we have heard quite a lot about mega-investment in hospitals over the past few years. Not many years ago, we had the so-called "Building a Healthy Birmingham" plan. At that stage we were promised an investment of £500 million in new and refurbished hospitals in the city. We were told—and we knew—that the hospital stock in Birmingham had not had sufficient investment for many years. Part of that investment included a new children's hospital.

The "Building a Healthy Birmingham" plan was unpopular because the regional health authority in one of its guises had not talked to many people about it and when it did, it did not listen to them. When that plan was dropped, nobody shed many tears, but a couple of years later—about two years ago—a new document called "Looking Forward" told us that we would have investment of more than £100 million in hospital services in Birmingham.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Michael Morris): Order. This is not a general debate about hospital services in Birmingham. It is a very specific debate about Dudley Road hospital.

Mr. Burden: The relevance to Dudley Road will become clear. It relates directly to a letter about Dudley Road and the dinner to which my hon. Friend the Member for Perry Barr referred concerning Dudley Road, which puts the issue in the context of hospital developments in Birmingham.

"Looking Forward" talked about around £100 million investment. I took that up with the Minister responsible for health in another place who explained that it was not really a cut in hospital investment. I could not see that. The new programme promised no new children's hospital, just a rejigged children's hospital on another site, but we were promised a new emphasis on primary care.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. It is no use the hon. Gentleman acknowledging a ruling from the Chair and then starting to talk about primary care, which has little to do with Dudley Road.

Mr. Burden: I do not want to try your patience, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but my hon. Friend made the point that, if Dudley Road is to close as a district general hospital and there is not sufficient primary care in Birmingham, the idea being mooted of a network of cottage hospitals could not be effective.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am not prepared to debate the matter with the hon. Gentleman. This is the first time in three minutes that he has even mentioned Dudley Road. I will be most grateful if the hon. Gentleman will remark specifically about Dudley Road, and make such other allusions as may be relevant. So far, the hon. Gentleman has not referred to Dudley Road.

Mr. Burden: Because of public concern about Dudley Road, the chair of NHS Executive West Midlands, Brian Edwards, wrote to all Birmingham Members of Parliament on 6 June. He explained:

"I thought it might be helpful if I put events into the sequence in which they occurred."

Item 3 states:

"On 26 April Brian Edwards met the Chief Executives of all hospitals in Birmingham to discuss how hospitals might work together to improve services and reduce unnecessary costs. Roger Tarver, of City Hospital, copied his personal notes of the meeting to his fellow Directors."

I have a copy of those notes. The third paragraph states:

"Regional officers had decided that a new, but much smaller, hospital should be built at Dudley Road."

However, Mr. Baker's letter continued:

"We have absolutely no plans to close City Hospital. It not only services a very needy local population but also plays an essential part in the fabric of the Health Service in Birmingham."

Personal notes or not, it is clear that City hospital's chief executive believed from a meeting attended by representatives of all the hospitals in the area and of the regional health authority, to plan future hospital services in Birmingham, that City hospital as we know it was to be replaced by a new, smaller hospital—and that some of the services that it and other hospitals provide would be rejigged elsewhere.

Roger Tarver's notes state:

"The Birmingham Women's Health Care Trust—not wishing to become a baby factory—could provide services for complicated births and neonatals currently dealt with at City Hospital."

So we need to ask what plans there are for maternity services at City hospital. Another note observes:

"An option appraisal is to be developed for the relocation of orthopaedic services from the Woodlands site. It will compare a new build at the City Hospital with use of the new Solihull Hospital, given that there appear to be limited uses for the latter, the preferred solution is predictable."

That concerns me because, on the face of it, that note states that Dudley Road will have a new range of services, including extra orthopaedic services—but that they might go to Solihull hospital instead. The point is, though, that those services would come from Woodlands hospital on the borders of my constituency, which has been the subject of a long and well supported campaign over the past two years to remain open. We thought that it had finally been reprieved just a few months ago, and it has been given trust status. It could now lose its lifeblood of orthopaedic services to City hospital. We must have answers.

When the new regime arrived in West Midlands regional health authority, it was at pains to emphasise that it wanted to be open and have a dialogue with Members of Parliament and the people of Birmingham. We were told that the lessons of the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" plan had been learnt and that henceforth, everything would be above aboard, and everybody would be involved and told what was happening. The events of the past few weeks leave me most worried. The *Birmingham Evening Mail* is right to print the words "We are watching you" whenever it mentions the issue. We do not currently have enough confidence in the system to know what is happening.

At an apparently private dinner on 26 April, the City hospital chief executive took personal notes that imply comprehensive reorganisation of Birmingham health services, involving the possible transfer of orthopaedics from my constituency to Solihull hospital, which is under threat, or to Dudley Road. There is mention of maternity services now at Dudley Road being transferred to the women's hospital, and of changes at the children's hospital.

Those matters are of major public concern. Every time I ask the regional health authority what is going on, we are told that planning is a matter for individual trusts. Now we are told that all the trusts and hospitals have got together with the regional health authority over dinner to devise a new blueprint for Birmingham hospital services.

We must know what is happening. I am pleased that we are meeting the regional health authority chief executive in a day or so, and I hope that he will give answers. I hope that Ministers can give answers as well. All the problems that London—which has received a good deal of publicity over health care—is experiencing are equally important in Birmingham. The future of local hospitals are important to local people. They made their views crystal clear in the "Building a Healthy Birmingham" debate. They want to be listened to and to have say. They do not want to be bounced into things, and they want people to be straight with them.

What is the future of City hospital? How big will it be? How many beds will it have? If there are plans to build a new hospital, we have a right to know how it will be financed. As my hon. Friend said, the capital charges debate has bedevilled a number of Birmingham hospital projects, including the children's hospital rebuild.

Added to that is the private finance initiative. My experience of it in Birmingham relates to a new primary health care centre, when it led to further delays in the building programme. If City hospital is to be rebuilt, will private finance be sought? If so, from where? Will it be just an injection of private capital into something that will remain a national health service development in all its aspects—I mean, one owned and run by the NHS, and whose ancillaries services will be run by the NHS? If we do not receive a clear answer, I will be profoundly worried.

I hope that the Minister will answer our questions today and will also tell the people who run the NHS Executive West Midlands that, before they embark on mega-reorganisations in future, they must talk to Members of Parliament and to the people of Birmingham.

8.18 pm

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): With the leave of the House, I shall make a short contribution to this Adjournment debate. My constituency is not in west Birmingham but lies to the east, and Heartlands is my district hospital. I want to emphasise the importance of the matter to the whole of the city.

At risk is the confidence that Birmingham people were just about beginning to have in health provision management in the west midlands. The Minister will not need reminding that West Midlands regional health authority and Birmingham hospitals have been through a difficult time in recent years. There is a history of mismanagement and poor service. One of the worst effects of that was that it damaged public morale and the public's confidence in their hospitals.

There has been a period of quiet over the past year or 18 months since the new administrators took office, and some good things have happened. The fact that waiting

[Ms Estelle Morris]

times in all our hospitals, including Dudley Road, have fallen is much to be welcomed. There has been a healing process; the period of quiet has been a time when people's experience of hospitals—although by no means satisfactory, and no excuse for resting on laurels—has not been as bad as it was two or three years ago.

Now there is a perception among people throughout Birmingham that the period of quiet has been used as an opportunity to plan the closure of another hospital. That is tragic. Not only would it be a tragedy if Dudley Road were closed, but the recovery of morale among the people of the city would be hindered. The Minister must begin quickly to explain the intentions of his administrators as regards the city of Birmingham.

This problem is a festering sore. If it is left to fester, the people who live in the west of the city—the constituents of my hon. Friends the Members for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) and for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker)—will not know the future of their health care in hospital, and they will be pitched into a period of uncertainty that we could well do without. It is the very last thing we want.

Furthermore, we do not want the public's lack of confidence in the hospital administrators to be allowed to grow. We do not want to have to come to the Minister and tell him that, if he is going to save Birmingham's hospitals, he will have to change the chief executive and the hierarchy again.

Let us nip the problem in the bud. Let us have some openness and some clear answers, so that we and the people of Birmingham can take part in the debate, if one is to take place. People in the west of Birmingham must not be left uncertain as to whether they will have a hospital. They need to know that the people running our hospital service are prepared to consult them about what has been going on behind their backs, and that they will not act without taking their views into account.

We ask, first, for an assurance that Dudley Road will continue; secondly, for an assurance that the administration of our hospitals is in good hands and will be opened up. Thirdly, we ask, even today, for an end to the rumours, scaremongering and uncertainty that are plaguing everyone who works in our hospital service—and all the families who look to it for their health care.

8.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I welcome the fact that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Ms Short) has sought this debate. Indeed, I am not surprised that she has. I have seen some of the headlines in the various Birmingham newspapers; clearly things have been said, which have caused alarm. I should like to do what I can to calm those fears, although in doing so I also recommend that hon. Members present for the debate meet the regional health authority—I believe that they intend to do so. Mr. Brian Edwards will be in a position to reinforce what I am about to say.

There are no plans to close the City hospital, otherwise known as the Dudley Road hospital. There have been suggestions and discussions—this is all now in the open—between many of the chief executives and other local employees of the health service about the possible advantages of redeveloping City hospital, for a number of reasons.

Clearly, the hospital is a large and rambling site. It is also of a certain age and, as Mr. Bryan Baker, chairman of the RHA, put it—much better than I could:

> "Although the staff at City Hospital provide an excellent service, the buildings are now as much a hindrance as a help, particularly the cramped Accident and Emergency and Out-patient building at the front of the hospital, and the long corridor of wards in the main block."

So there is apparently general agreement among those working for the health authorities and trusts concerned that patients and staff could probably benefit from a new development of the hospital.

That is not to say that the hospital will close, or that the services there will be withdrawn. But all over the country, older hospitals, particularly those that are rambling and difficult for staff and patients, are being redeveloped. Hundreds of millions of pounds are being spent on building new hospitals or building new wings on current hospitals, and that is good. Thus, I was a little concerned to hear the hon. Lady apparently rejecting out of hand the idea of a redevelopment. She should not do that.

Ms Short: No one would reject a redevelopment of the local hospital, although it is not such a shambles as to amount to a crisis. It does not need to be pulled down; it works quite well. People like the space in older hospitals. What we reject is a cottage hospital. If we are being conned with one, we do not want any part of it. We would rather keep what we have.

Mr. Sackville: I can reassure the hon. Lady that it will not be a cottage hospital or a tiny hospital. I acknowledge that the notes circulated by Mr. Tarver, and his letter, were open to alarmist interpretations. The view that he expressed was not, as far as I know, shared by his board or the other authorities involved. It should be seen merely as a contribution to the preliminary part of an important debate that will take place on the buildings at the City hospital.

If there is to be a new development and it is thought that there are good reasons for one, it will be the subject of a great deal of open consultation. As a Health Minister, I would expect no less. The resulting hospital is likely to be physically smaller than hospitals that would have been built some time ago. There are a number of reasons for that: hospital design, and the fact that there is much more day surgery these days. Stays in hospital are shorter; much more work is done in the form of out-patient work. Some conditions that used to require stays of a week or more are treated in one day now, or even require no in-patient admission at all. There is no argument between us on that point—hence the emergence of smaller hospitals.

As that process continues around the country, we find that more patients are being treated. To quote a well-worn statistic: we now treat more than 120 patients for every 100 treated four or five years ago—after making allowance for the small change in the method of counting, from deaths and discharges to finished consultant episodes.

Mr. Rooker: I am elected to represent the citizens of Birmingham, and we are also here in Parliament to take a national overview. My experience tells me that we cannot

use what is happening in the rest of the country to organise Birmingham. The fact is that we have been short-changed on our hospital care for a decade or more. Primary health care infrastructure has not been built up to cope with the changes in the hospitals. The pressures on the community care services exerted by speeding patients through hospitals, and bringing them back to hospital time and again, have brought those services to breaking point. That is why I am worried by talk of a smaller hospital without guarantees that primary health care and the necessary mini-health centres around Birmingham will be in place before we start.

Mr. Sackville: A reduction in the number of beds—we have heard all the arguments about that, especially in London recently—must be accompanied by a discussion with everyone concerned and by every attempt to reassure the public, along with the provision of suitable primary care and other community care facilities. We cannot rely on a change to day surgery alone. If we are to reduce the number of acute beds, we must ensure that there are facilities to treat people elsewhere. It is often an improvement from a health point of view to treat people in their homes or near their homes instead of admitting them to hospital. In terms of outcome, that is often an improvement. I agree with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) that we must not proceed with bed reductions without being sure that the facilities that are needed are put in place.

I was asked specific questions by the hon. Member for Ladywood. She asked whether there were plans for a new hospital. No, there are not. There have been some preliminary discussions, the general outcome of which is that it is likely to be advantageous to redevelop City hospital. The hon. Lady asked me when that would happen. That I cannot answer, because there are no firm plans at present. She asked me what the budget would be. I do not know, because in advance of detailed proposals for major hospital schemes, it is impossible to make any estimate. I can only tell the hon. Lady that there are many schemes throughout the country where £50 million or more in capital is being spent, in either building a new hospital or redeveloping parts of major hospitals.

Mr. Burden: The chief executive of the NHS Executive West Midlands has specifically mentioned £100 million in talking about the City hospital site. May we be clear that there is no plan for an investment of £100 million? May we take it that it could be more or less, and that mention of £100 million should not be taken as a guarantee?

Mr. Sackville: That is correct. It would be impossible to calculate at this stage the capital cost of a major new future development. Such a figure would be an informed guess of the cost of development and would make it a major hospital development. We are tending to see smaller hospitals rather than larger ones.

There is no question of an experiment. The words used by Mr. Tarver described his own view. The most likely outcome of any discussion on redevelopment is a more traditional hospital model, even if that is accompanied by a certain amount of provision for community facilities.

The hon. Member for Ladywood also asked me about extra funding for the deficit that is still being experienced in the finances of City hospital. As she knows, that money has been made available. It will be made available, however, on the condition that plans are laid to bring the finances of the trust into balance, as with every other trust throughout the country. She should not suppose from what I have just said that there will be massive redundancies or cuts in services.

Ms Short: I hope that the Minister listened to what I said about the problem arising from the formula for funding west Birmingham. We are faced with a problem of success. The hospital has treated more patients. We cannot make up the deficit without a reorganisation of the funding. Everyone who works in the hospital has worked harder. The problem with funding is not the fault of the staff. I hope that the Minister will give an undertaking that funding will be examined specifically.

Mr. Sackville: I would expect the regional health authority and the districts concerned to arrive at a fair method of allocating funds to match the problems—social, medical and others—of the local population. The hon. Lady makes an important point.

I have been assured that, if redundancies are necessary, the trust would hope to confine them to support services and administration. It would not be looking for redundancies. It would be more likely to seek a freezing of vacancies to ensure that savings could be made without painful, large-scale redundancies or damage to patient services. It is an exercise that has had to be undertaken at several hospitals throughout the country. The hon. Lady will rarely, if ever, have heard of large-scale redundancies in our acute hospitals.

The hon. Members for Ladywood and for Perry Barr asked about openness. I give an undertaking that no plans will be brought forward in secret. If there are to be developments at City hospital, they will be discussed widely.

I reiterate that it is unfortunate that various rumours have circulated and that Mr. Tarver's remarks have been misinterpreted, giving rise to the idea that the hospital will close. There are no plans to close City hospital.

Mr. Rooker: I have not had any discussions with Mr. Tarver for about two and a half years. Given what has been said, and in the light of the letter last week from the regional executive disowning Mr. Tarver's letter to me, I seek an assurance that Mr. Tarver, who has been a loyal servant to the health authority, will not be made a scapegoat because of the bad publicity that has been received by the RHA. It is bad enough that consultants have been threatened with the sack for talking to Members here and in the other place. We shall not accept the scapegoating of any servant of the health service in Birmingham for doing his duty and telling the truth. I seek the Minister's assurance that Mr. Tarver will not be scapegoated.

Mr. Sackville: I wish to make it absolutely clear that the remarks to which the hon. Gentleman has referred should not be seen as anything more than a contribution to the debate.

Ms Short: Mr. Tarver is deeply respected by everyone who lives in the area of which I represent a part. Perhaps he was more honest than some when discussions took place at dinners. Rumours have been confirmed by several different sources. We are not dealing only with Mr. Tarver's minute.

[Ms Short]

It would be intolerable if it were suggested that he should be penalised in any way. We consider him to be a good man and we want him to continue to work for the trust.

Mr. Sackville: I note the defence that has been mounted on behalf of Mr. Tarver. I am not attacking him. I am trying to put in context the views that have been expressed, which have clearly led to considerable alarm.

It was said by the hon. Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) and for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) that in the west midlands, especially in Birmingham, there has been a period of relative calm about health matters in recent months, and perhaps over the past year or more. That is to be welcomed, and I hope that it will continue.

Much has happened over the past few months. More patients are being treated. About £26 million is being spent on improving primary care facilities. There has been a remarkable achievement in waiting times, as the hon. Member for Ladywood mentioned. The redevelopment of City hospital has been mooted and it should be good news for health in Birmingham if it goes ahead.

Birmingham is acknowledged as a centre of excellence. It is home to Europe's first quick and early diagnosis unit for cancer treatment. It is one of the country's designated heart transplant centres. New and high-quality accident and emergency facilities are being developed in a number of places. There is good news. It is unfortunate that certain reports have given rise to alarm. I hope that I have been able to put the matter in context.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes to Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 13 June 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Long-term Unemployment

1. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the benefits to the long-term unemployed of current Government policies. [26468]

The Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Michael Portillo): Government policies have produced economic growth and falling unemployment. The proportion of the unemployed out of work for more than a year is markedly below the European Community average.

Sir Michael Neubert: Is my right hon. Friend aware that when the Social Affairs Commissioner came to the House two or three years ago, Mrs. Papandreou said that of the many millions out of work in Europe at that time 35 per cent. had not had a job at all? Is it not clear from my right hon. Friend's answer that the prospects for the long-term unemployed are far better in Britain than in countries that have adopted the inflexibility and business burdens of the social chapter, and how is it possible for the Labour party not to have noticed that?

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend is too generous. The Labour party has noticed it. It is not in favour of the social chapter out of ignorance of its consequences. It knows perfectly well that the social chapter would destroy jobs in Britain. It is in favour of the social chapter because it has done a cynical deal with the trade unions: that is the basis of the social chapter. What would my hon. Friend expect from a party that receives most of its money from the trade unions? All the members of the shadow Cabinet are sponsored by trade unions. Votes at Labour's conference are dominated by trade unions. That is why the Labour party is in favour of the social chapter—it is not out of ignorance of the fact that the social chapter would destroy British jobs. I am against the social chapter because I am determined to defend British interests and jobs.

Mr. Barry Jones: Can the right hon. Gentleman say, after 16 years of Conservative government, how many long-term unemployed people there are in our nation?

Mr. Portillo: There are 886,000 people who have been without a job for more than a year. The proportion is 37 per cent., but during the last recession it reached 44 per cent. The proportion in this country is lower than in other European Union countries. That is the point that the hon. Gentleman must face. We are pursuing policies that enable people to get back to work. We are pursuing policies that have produced an unemployment rate of 8.5 per cent., compared with the European Community average of 10.8 per cent. The interesting thing for the hon. Gentleman is that the countries with the higher rates of unemployment are the countries that are pursuing the policies advocated by his party.

Mr. Rathbone: Would my right hon. Friend care to tell the House how much of that welcome reduction in unemployment is due to our active membership of the European Union and how much of it would be put at risk if we withdrew?

Mr. Portillo: I believe that we benefit very much indeed from being part of a single European market. The Government have fought hard to create that single European market, but it is well recognised that other features that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has been wise enough to remain outside, such as the social chapter, are job-destroying measures. My hon. Friend is right to put his finger on the fact that there are advantages to us from membership of the single European market. I know that he in no way dissents from the position of the Government and the Conservative party that we will never be part of the social chapter.

Ministerial Meetings

2. **Mr. John Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met other EU Ministers to discuss unemployment statistics. [26469]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Phillip Oppenheim): Employment matters feature regularly in discussions with ministerial counterparts. I am pleased to say that the rate of unemployment in the UK is well below the Community average, and particularly below the rates in countries with a minimum wage.

Mr. Evans: In view of that interesting answer, will the Minister acknowledge that no other EU country measures its unemployment in the same way as Great Britain? Does he agree that until such time as we have statistical uniformity throughout the EU, anyone who seeks to compare Britain's unemployment with that of any other EU country is either ill-informed or deceitful?

Mr. Oppenheim: As I know that the hon. Gentleman is not a suspicious man by nature, I shall help him out on this one. All major industrial countries, including Britain, publish two sets of unemployment figures: one based on the benefit system, which, in Britain, is the claimant count; and one using an international standard, which in Britain is called the labour force survey—which the TUC has called fully reliable, and which even Labour supports. This latter international standard figure is used in international comparisons of unemployment rates.

The hon. Gentleman is completely wrong to claim that we are not comparing like with like, and I hope that he will withdraw that allegation.

Mrs. Angela Knight: Will my hon. Friend confirm, whatever method is used to calculate unemployment statistics, that it is overwhelmingly obvious that Britain has more people in work than almost any other European country—and, what is more, has lower youth

unemployment as well? Does he therefore find it surprising, as I do, that the Labour party has voted against the policies that have reduced unemployment while adopting proposals that have been manifestly shown to increase it?

Mr. Oppenheim: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Britain has one of the highest proportions in Europe of the working age population in work. But Labour's policies, so far as it has any on this issue, are totally contradictory. The hon. Member for Peckham (Ms Harman) said this morning that she wants both full employment and a minimum wage, yet the Labour leader and deputy leader both admit that a minimum wage would cost jobs. No wonder the Opposition are not telling us at what level they would set the minimum wage. They are hoping that the low paid will not find out the true cost in terms of lost jobs until after the election.

Mr. Barron: The Minister cannot deny that most of the 30 changes in the monthly claimant count over the past 10 years have been designed to reduce that count—clearly, too, the jobseeker's allowance is designed to do the same again in due course. When he discusses employment policies with other European Ministers, will the hon. Gentleman explain to them why the Government, by driving wages down in this country, are creating poverty pay? Millions of people are still unemployed here as a result. While Britain becomes increasingly a low-wage, low-skill, low-tech economy, other countries have invested in training and infrastructure, as well as putting a floor under wages. Is not that why they will be far better off than us?

Mr. Oppenheim: There are so many fallacies in that statement that it is difficult to know where to begin. Let me, first, gently remind the hon. Gentleman that changes to the unemployment count did not begin in 1979. One of the largest ever changes was made in 1976, when the Labour Government took 100,000 people off at a stroke.

If the hon. Gentleman does not like the claimant count, let him stick with the labour force survey, which shows unemployment totals almost exactly the same as the claimant count. His claim that we believe in poverty pay is belied by the facts. We all want people to be better paid—

Mr. Barron: It is your policy.

Mr. Oppenheim: If the hon. Gentleman will let me finish—we all want people to be better paid, especially the low paid, but it is fundamentally dishonest of Labour to pretend that there is some magic wand: a no-cost way of raising people's pay without costing jobs. In Britain, pay stagnated in the late 1970s. Because our economy is so much more successful now, pay at all levels has increased, especially for the low paid. The hon. Gentleman is wrong on all counts.

Social Chapter

3. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the employment implications for Britain of agreeing to the social chapter. [26471]

Mr. Portillo: The social chapter of the Maastricht treaty would have reduced firms' competitiveness and destroyed jobs. That is why we could not—and will not—accept it.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the vast majority of the British public increasingly recognise the value of the opt-outs that we successfully negotiated at Maastricht? Should we not seek to repatriate powers to this country and this House, where they belong, instead of giving more and more powers to the Brussels bureaucrats, as Opposition spokesmen would like us to?

Mr. Portillo: President Chirac has commented that there is disquiet throughout Europe about the way in which the European Union appears not to have dealt with unemployment. People look to Europe to help them to create jobs. As I said in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Mr. Rathbone), the single European market has helped the creation of employment; but putting burdens on employers which make them reluctant to employ people, or which raise wages so that fewer people are employed, does not help to deal with unemployment in Europe.

There are 20 million people in the EU without work. I shall continue to emphasise to my colleagues in Europe that we need to tackle unemployment—we are not there simply to pander to trade union interests.

Ms Harman: How can the Secretary of State boast to the House and to other European countries about Britain's unemployment record when, over the past five years, 11 million people have been unemployed at one time or another? Is not the Tory party the party of high unemployment? Why does he continue to oppose a national minimum wage when he has now taken to saying that he cares about the low paid? Is he prepared to justify the fact that one third of a million people in this country are on £1.50 an hour or less? How can he justify the fact that more than 1 million people are on less than £2.50 an hour? Does not his opposition to the social chapter have nothing to do with the interests or concerns about British people at work but everything to do with the splits in his party?

Mr. Portillo: None of us in Europe can boast, because none of us is doing well enough, but countries that have adopted the policies advocated by the hon. Lady have done terrible things to their populations. In Spain, which has a minimum wage, youth unemployment is three times higher than in the United Kingdom. In France, which has a minimum wage, youth unemployment is twice as high as in the United Kingdom. Jobs are being destroyed by minimum wages across Europe. The Labour party knows that. It knows, too, that the unions are demanding that differentials are fully maintained, so that most of the money that is spent on a minimum wage will not be spent on helping people at the bottom but on remunerating people at every wage level. We know that, according to the sums that have been advocated by the unions, 800,000 jobs would be lost, even if only half the differentials were restored. The hon. Lady is not straightforward or honest with the House. *[Interruption.]* She knows that a minimum wage—

Madam Speaker: Order. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will reflect on what he said and rephrase his remarks.

Mr. Portillo: The hon. Lady is not being straightforward because she will not tell us at what level the minimum wage would be set. Everything depends on

that level. She knows that the minimum wage would destroy jobs, which is why she is not prepared to tell us at what level it would be set.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the acid test of whether any socialist party can call itself modern lies in its attitude towards whether individuals are free to offer their labour to an employer who wishes to employ them? Does he further agree that there is no hope of the Opposition modernising their attitude while so many of their members remain in the pay of the trade unions?

Mr. Portillo: The extraordinary feature of Labour's employment policies is that new Labour has dreamt up ways of destroying jobs that even old Labour had not discovered. The minimum wage was not introduced by old Labour; the social chapter was not advocated by old Labour. They are inventions of new Labour, presumably as a result of the domination of the Labour party by the trade unions and its willingness to bow the knee and to grovel to them.

Training Programmes

4. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what advice his Department gives to unemployed people who cannot find places on the training for work programmes. [26472]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. James Paice): There are a large number of training places for those seeking them, and for whom training is the best course of action, but training is not necessarily the priority need of all unemployed people. That is why the Employment Service provides a range of help, including jobmatch, 1-2-1, workwise, the travel-to-interview scheme, job search seminars and many others.

With your permission, Madam Speaker, I shall remain standing.

Mr. Williams: Because of changes that the Minister's Department has introduced in the training for work programme in the past year, requiring training providers to choose people who are most likely to have a successful outcome, my local authority, Dyfed county council, has had to cut its programme of 260 places by more than 100 places this year. Are not young people who are being rejected now being doubly disadvantaged? They are out of work yet are also being rejected even from lowly places on training schemes.

Mr. Paice: I know that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, who is responsible for training schemes in Wales, has written to the hon. Gentleman on this subject.

Under the training for work scheme, in both England and Wales we have adopted special measures to ensure that those with special training needs, and those at a particular disadvantage, are protected. The output payments are considerably higher for those people than for others, and in England, at any rate, we have ring-fenced the numbers involved so that there can be a diminution in the number of people with special needs who undertake training in training for work programmes. We have addressed, quite properly, the very issue that concerns the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Evennett: I welcome my hon. Friend to the Dispatch Box. Conservative Members are pleased to have him back with us.

Does my hon. Friend agree that what most people want are jobs? They want to be trained to get a job; they do not just want training for its own sake. My hon. Friend's policies, therefore, are designed to provide jobs for people, not just training for its own sake.

Mr. Paice: My hon. Friend is entirely right. The 2.3 million unemployed people in this country are not a homogeneous mass; they are a vast range of different people with different skills, different personal requirements and different needs in the jobs market. That is why it is right for us to provide a range of opportunities. There is exactly the same number of opportunities this year as last year: 1.5 million different opportunities involving training, help with interview skills, help with travelling to interviews and help with searching for jobs, through jobclubs. We provide that range because it is what people need.

Mr. Barnes: I am glad that the Minister recognises that training does not always constitute adequate provision. In fact, in many cases it is not all that hot. Research suggests that more general educational provision is useful to adults, providing them with inroads into educational opportunities. According to a research document on miners who have been made unemployed in south Yorkshire and north-east Derbyshire, produced by the adult education department of Sheffield university, adult education makes an important contribution to solving the problems of unemployment, and the provision of training skills is inadequate.

Mr. Paice: The report to which the hon. Gentleman draws my attention will not be launched until tomorrow, and I have therefore had no chance to study it. He is, however, right in saying that training is not the only requirement; some people need an enhancement of their educational base, and that too is possible through some of our programmes.

The hon. Gentleman is rightly concerned about former miners who lost their jobs through the restructuring of the mining industry. The good news is that unemployment is falling in all mining areas, as it is in the rest of the country.

Ministerial Meetings

5. **Mr. Patrick Thompson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what discussions he has had with other EU Employment Ministers on measures to reduce unemployment. [26473]

Mr. Portillo: At meetings of the Social Affairs Council, I have urged my fellow Employment Ministers to make job creation the first priority, and not to pursue new labour market restrictions and regulations, which can only destroy jobs.

Mr. Thompson: On that positive note, was my right hon. Friend able to discuss with his European colleagues the reasons why the United Kingdom is leading the way to lower unemployment in Europe? Was he also able to discuss the benefits flowing from our membership of the European Union, not least the right of our work force to work in Community countries? Can he confirm, for example, that in 1989 some 5,100 English people were working in Belgium, and that in 1991 some 42,600 were working in Germany? Are those not benefits?

Mr. Portillo: The Essen European Council invited each country to describe the way in which it had been tackling

unemployment in a document. We published ours last week, and it shows a range of measures that have helped to bring down unemployment in Britain. I also think it absolutely right for us to share our experiences.

I agree with my hon. Friend that labour mobility benefits everyone in the European Community, but at the last meeting we spent nearly all our time discussing the posted workers directive, which would restrict the mobility of labour in Europe. That was one of my reasons for opposing it.

My hon. Friend will recognise that there is now only one market—the global market. We shall work hard to ensure that the European Union acts as a stepping stone to that global market, rather than a stumbling block.

Mr. Janner: What minimum standards, if any, does the Secretary of State consider that European Governments, including our own, should propose to protect people at work?

Mr. Portillo: I think that the minimum standards should be decided by the Parliament of the country concerned and not by the European Union.

Mr. Jenkin: Has my right hon. Friend read a speech delivered by Jack Dromey in May, which cited a number of legal actions where Government policy has been defeated by the action of European law? He uses those examples to describe the Government's attempt to opt out of the social chapter as futile. Are we not in danger of losing the opt-out because of the creeping competence of the European Union and must we not get those competences back by repatriating powers from the European Union to the House to protect Government policy?

Mr. Portillo: I think Britain has had a tremendous influence on the development of the social chapter, which has not advanced at anything above a snail's pace because we have not been part of it. Jacques Delors said that this country would become a paradise for investment, so other countries do not want to burden themselves when Britain is outside the social chapter. We have demonstrated that we can have real influence in Europe by taking a strong position, but Mr. Dromey's speech showed how the unions are determined to use the European Union's social chapter to re-establish their power at European level. That speech illustrated the connection in the Labour party's mind between the social chapter and union power more clearly than I have ever seen it demonstrated before and I commend it to every Conservative Member.

Ms Harman: Why does not the Secretary of State repatriate his concern about unemployment? Why is he always talking about unemployment in Spain? Why does he never talk about the unemployment that his Government is causing in this country? Is he more worried about unemployment in Madrid than unemployment in Manchester? Does not he recognise that working people work best, and businesses are therefore more successful, if they feel secure, part of a team and confident that they have the protection of minimum standards? Will he therefore reaffirm his commitment to Britain's membership of the International Labour Organisation?

Mr. Portillo: I thought that the hon. Lady's comments bordered on the xenophobic. My being well known for having a trans-European and global interest is no reason for her to lay into me in that way. I am concerned that some people in this country cannot remember a Labour Government in Britain, so we must illustrate what the impact of Labour policies would be. Such policies are today being followed in Spain and they have produced youth unemployment three times as high as in Britain and a position whereby one third of the entire work force is on temporary contracts.

I am reviewing the value for money that our membership of the ILO gives us, but I deplore the political posturing that the TUC has undertaken in trying to manipulate that international body into taking political postures borne out of prejudices of its own invention. The Government do not allow people at GCHQ to be represented by national trade unions because national security is at stake. That is an important position and one that the Government will maintain.

Jobfinder's Grant

6. **Mr. Clifton-Brown:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many long-term unemployed people he expects to be helped back into employment by the recent extension of the jobfinder's grant. [26474]

The Minister of State, Department of Employment (Miss Ann Widdecombe): We have made 25,000 jobfinder's grants available to help long-term unemployed people into work. But that is just one of a wide range of measures, and altogether the Department of Employment offers unemployed people 1.5 million opportunities for help every year.

Mr. Clifton-Brown: Does my hon. Friend agree that the jobfinder's grant is merely part of a comprehensive package, which has enabled our country to create more than 600,000 jobs—more than any other country in the European Union—since December 1992? Is not that in total contrast to the Labour party's policies of a minimum wage and adoption of the social chapter, which would destroy jobs?

Miss Widdecombe: Indeed, and it is due to the Government's policies that we also have lower long-term unemployment than the average for the European Union. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The jobfinder's grant is just one of a wide range of measures that include jobstart, work trials and national insurance contributions holidays for employers, which are all designed to assist long-term unemployed people into work. The Opposition's policies would, on the contrary, prolong and create unemployment. Their deputy leader refers to it as a "shake-out" and their leader refers to it as the result of an "econometric model". Whatever it amounts to and however they describe it, it means increasing misery for British workers. That is what the Opposition are promising.

Mr. Clapham: The Minister will be aware that a large proportion of the unemployment in Barnsley is of a long-term nature. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) referred to the document published by Sheffield university. One of its proposals is that accredited education courses should be included in the training for jobs scheme, effectively making it education and training for jobs. Is the Minister prepared to give serious consideration to that proposal?

Miss Widdecombe: We give serious consideration to all sensible proposals that are put to us and we will always

examine any possibilities that give a greater link between education, vocational training and employment. But I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that long-term unemployment is falling, that it is falling in his region as much as elsewhere and that what he should be giving his constituents is a message of hope. He should be welcoming the tried and tested policies that we have implemented. Instead of which, the message that he gives his constituents is, "Labour Government—loss of jobs."

Mr. John Marshall: Does my hon. Friend agree that long-term unemployed people want an availability of jobs? At a time when the European Community share of world trade is declining, does he agree that the European Union should reduce burdens on industry, as recommended by the Government, rather than increase them, as recommended by the Labour party?

Miss Widdecombe: Indeed. The European Union increasingly recognises that, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development recognises that, the International Monetary Fund recognises that and we recognised it long before anyone else, but the Opposition cannot catch up. All they have to offer is old policies; they cannot dress them up as anything new. The hon. Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) may well put his hands up in surrender—that is what British workers can do if they get a Labour Government.

Mr. McCartney: The hon. Lady wants to stop manufacturing soundbites for Brussels and manufacture some jobs for Britain. Have not the Government introduced a jobfinder's grant because, since their friends in the privatised utilities have taken control, they have lost 250,000 jobs, at a cost of £1 billion to the taxpayer? When will the Minister of State have discussions with her friends at the top of the privatised utilities to persuade them to stop putting their snouts in the trough while sacking their workers? When are the Government going to do something about the massive job losses in the utilities, while those at the top take pay rises and share options for themselves?

Miss Widdecombe: Why does the hon. Gentleman not consult that document that is so beloved of himself and the trade unions—the labour force survey? If he does so, he will see that employment is rising. Will he welcome that? No. Bad news is the only thing that he ever welcomes, but there is now consistent good news: falling unemployment, falling long-term unemployment, rising employment, the highest participation rates in Europe, long-term unemployment below the European average higher than average youth employment. All those are the results of our flexible labour market policies. When will the hon. Gentleman welcome those? I look forward to the day when the Opposition stand up for British workers, instead of standing up for their own interests.

Mr. Harry Greenway: Does my hon. Friend agree that jobfinder's grant is designed to stimulate people to go on looking for work even when the going may be hard? That contrasts with the absurd view of the Labour party, which seeks to put it about that getting a job is easy and that, if jobs cannot be come by, the state would be ready to give other people's money to anyone who asks for it without anybody suffering. It is not like that.

Miss Widdecombe: The Opposition's policies are essentially cruel because they set out to deceive the most vulnerable by making them believe that there is some simple solution. There is no simple solution. The wide range of measures that we have put in place, however, keeps our youth and long-term unemployment below the European average and our participation rate higher. Those policies result in a better life for British workers, and they are our policies.

West Cumbria

7. **Mr. Campbell-Savours:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he next intends to visit west Cumbria to discuss matters relating to employment with representatives of the local community. [26475]

Mr. Paice: I was recently in Cumbria and met members of the Cumbria training and enterprise council to discuss such matters.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Why keep 8,108 unemployed people in west Cumbria languishing on the dole when there is a vast amount of local work that could be done, such as environmental improvement, crime prevention, home insulation, security work, looking after the elderly, and community and general support services work? I have a list of projects that could be undertaken in west Cumbria if the Government would only see sense. Why keep people languishing on the dole?

Mr. Paice: Nobody wants to keep people languishing on the dole, as the hon. Gentleman puts it. Through the Employment Service and the training and enterprise councils, the Government are providing 1.5 million opportunities for people to get back to work. In addition, we are providing £65 million a year for economic development in Cumbria, which is way ahead of the amount spent in many other counties.

I understand that unemployment is higher in the hon. Gentleman's constituency than in other parts of the country; of course that is sad. Why does he not recognise, however, that unemployment has fallen in the past year and in the past two years and that it has fallen since the equivalent peak in the economic cycle in 1986? It is going in the right direction. Why does the hon. Gentleman espouse policies that would not deal with those 8,000 people? His policies would add another 8,000 or 10,000 or 20,000 to the number of unemployed people in west Cumbria.

Age Discrimination

8. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what are the aims of the "Too Old, Who Says?" campaign; and if he will make a statement. [26477]

Miss Widdecombe: The campaign for older workers aims to counter age discrimination in the workplace. It is targeted at employers, recruitment agencies and older workers. The advice, guidance and support provided through publications, promotional events and media coverage seek to increase the number and range of job opportunities available to older workers.

Mr. Spring: Does my hon. Friend agree that unwarranted age restrictions on jobs can deprive employers of valuable and experienced potential employees? Will my hon. Friend therefore join me in applauding the increase in the upper age limit for the training for work programme from 59 to 63 so as to reduce any possibility of age discrimination?

Miss Widdecombe: I heartily endorse everything that my hon. Friend says. Employers who arbitrarily impose age restrictions are missing out on a wealth of talent and on very important resources. The economy is missing out on not being able to use the talents of such people. It was in recognition of the fact that older workers should be invested in as far as possible up to the age of retirement that we raised the training for work age limit from 59 to 63 as well as introduced a number of other measures which have benefited older workers.

Mr. Winnick: Does the Minister agree that any form of discrimination, especially age, is unacceptable? However, is there not a danger that the slogan "Too Old, Who Says?" could be undermined by Lady Thatcher's latest efforts to undermine this discredited and dying Government?

Miss Widdecombe: If that is the best that the hon. Gentleman can manage, the Opposition clearly have no commitment to older workers. If all they can manage is crude political abuse when we are discussing a matter of major importance to thousands of workers, I ask again what I asked earlier: how can the Labour party even claim to represent British workers of any age when it does not treat such issues seriously?

Mr. Waterson: Has my hon. Friend seen last year's manpower survey, which showed that some three quarters of employers were seriously considering making greater use of older workers? Does that not show that British industry is well aware of the enormous resource represented by the ability and experience of older workers?

Miss Widdecombe: Indeed, and more crucially, it shows that the Government's campaign on behalf of older workers has been a tremendous success. It proves that industry is absorbing the message and is now preparing to act on that message. The findings of that survey were a tribute to our campaign. I hope that they will be welcomed by the Opposition.

Job Matching

9. **Mr. Mackinlay:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures are proposed to match the availability of jobs to individuals' desire for full-time or part-time work as appropriate. [26515]

Mr. Paice: People who visit Employment Service offices around the country already have access to information about a range of vacancies, which are openly displayed and clearly marked as full time or part time.

Mr. Mackinlay: Is that not a callous and indifferent reply, given that, in addition to the millions of people who are unemployed, millions of people who need full-time jobs are in part-time jobs that are stultifying and inappropriate to their needs and skills? Is it not the duty of Government to maximise the potential of our country and our people by ensuring that people have jobs that are appropriate to their family circumstances, skills and aptitudes, and maximise their potential as human beings? The Government fail in that regard by maintaining a work force in part-time jobs that they do not want.

Mr. Paice: Not only does the hon. Gentleman fail to listen to the answer but his whole harangue is based on a misunderstanding. Survey after survey has demonstrated that some 86 per cent. of people in part-time jobs are in them because they want to be. A small proportion have part-time jobs in the hope that they will lead to full-time jobs. The Government have extended the jobmatch pilot so that people who get a part-time job can get an extra bonus through the benefit system to take on more than one part-time job and build up a portfolio to enhance their chances of that job leading to full-time employment.

Mr. Colvin: Why was the Government's job-sharing scheme, which ran in the late 1980s, wound up? In view of what my hon. Friend has just said, have the Government any plans to reintroduce work-sharing or job-splitting schemes? A good example of those is the House of Commons Library, where we have managed to retain high-quality staff through splitting jobs. That has enabled us to continue to benefit from the extremely high quality of research and advice which we get from our Library.

Mr. Paice: The short answer is that we have no plans to reintroduce those schemes. They were successful because they changed many people's cultural attitude to part-time working and the idea of job sharing. They are now engrained in the psyche and practice of many employers and employees who want to set about sharing their work because it fits with their family and domestic commitments. That is also why we introduced the jobmatch scheme this year for people who can genuinely get only part-time work and want to build up to full-time work.

Ms Short: I suggest to the Minister and his colleagues, particularly the Secretary of State, that it is because their party is funded in secret by shady business interests that they do not understand, in the way that the Labour party and the British trade union movement do, why people in Britain are so worried about what is happening in the job market and about our continuing economic decline. The Government are deeply unpopular because we have high unemployment, dreadfully low wages and lots of families who are trapped on benefit. That is what the Government are doing to the people of Britain. Is that not why the Government are so deeply loathed?

Mr. Paice: Nobody pretends that we are satisfied or happy with the present level of unemployment, but it has come down for 20 consecutive months as a result of the Government's policies. One hundred years ago, this country led the world in trade and exports. At last we are clawing our way back, as productivity is rising and we are regaining the markets of the world that we have lost. All the Labour party can do is bleat, whinge and put forward policies that would destroy our economic recovery.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June. [26458]

The Prime Minister (Mr. John Major): This morning, I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Amess: Will my right hon. Friend tell the House what the Government's attitude is towards reports that

socialist-controlled Essex county council is expecting parents to pay the costs of the transport of their children to grammar schools? Does that not show that, despite the warm words about choice and opportunity, Labour and the alliance in action are as malicious and vindictive as ever? So much for hung councils—so much for new Labour.

The Prime Minister: The vote by the Lib-Lab pact to deprive grammar school children of free bus passes seems to me to be mean-spirited and petty, and it does damage to the notion that the Labour party stands for choice and opportunity. It seems to show the true face of Labour in local government, and gives a warning that many people would be wise to take on board. Perhaps the leader of the Labour party will ask his local government colleagues to think again on this matter, as he has on other issues.

Mr. Blair: Does the Prime Minister still say—as he did three months ago—that it would be folly to close our options on joining a single currency, including in the next Parliament?

The Prime Minister: I set out the Government's position perfectly clearly before the House on 1 March. I made it clear that we had an opt-out, and that we would decide whether to join when the time for the decision came. We would then decide whether to exercise our opt-out. Nothing has changed.

Mr. Blair: Nothing has changed? Does that include in the next Parliament—yes or no?

The Prime Minister: Can the right hon. Gentleman tell me when the matter will come for a decision? He cannot. I just said perfectly clearly that when the matter comes for a decision—*[Interruption.]* It is perfectly clear—even for the right hon. Gentleman. When the matter comes for a decision, we will decide whether to exercise that opt-out.

Mr. Blair: Does that include in the next Parliament? Baroness Thatcher got it wrong. The Prime Minister is not the yes, yes man—he is the don't know, don't know man. When will he learn to give the lead on this issue, because it is too important to be the plaything either of the rival ambitions in the Cabinet or of the warring factions in his party, of whom increasingly he is the prisoner and not the master?

The Prime Minister: I have been observing the faces of some of the members of the Labour safeguards committee, who do not share the right hon. Gentleman's view on any aspect of his European policy. As for giving a lead, it was I who negotiated the choice that this country and no other country in Europe has, to make the decision that is right and in the interests of this country—whenever the matter may come up, as I have told the right hon. Gentleman twice.

Q2. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June. [26459]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Evans: I am proud to be Welsh and I am also an unashamed, Union Jack-waving Brit. Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 1235, signed by 75 hon. Members, which shows that the vast majority of people oppose bureaucratic assemblies, and that half the people who say that they will vote for the rabble opposite oppose devolution? Will my right hon. Friend continue his policies to protect and keep this kingdom united, and not sell out the vital interests of this country to sectional and divisive interests, as the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats would do?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. The Opposition proposals that we have seen on devolution are ill thought out and incomplete. On all the substantial questions, after many years of talking about their policy, the Opposition have made no decision on how to deal with the main questions that arise. If they know the answers, they are keeping quiet and, if they do not, it is about time they produced them, before seeking to inflict such a disastrous policy on the United Kingdom.

Q3. **Miss Hoey:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June. [26460]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Miss Hoey: The Prime Minister will know that I have been a strong supporter of the national lottery from the beginning, but does he realise that there is now growing concern about the way in which it operates, especially the huge profits that Camelot is making? Will he set up a small independent inquiry to examine those profits—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady will be heard.

Miss Hoey: Will the Prime Minister set up a small independent—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. I am hearing some remarks that are rather derogatory and, I might say, very personal. Miss Hoey has the Floor.

Miss Hoey: Perhaps the hon. Member concerned would like to repeat those remarks outside.

Will the Prime Minister agree to set up a small independent inquiry to examine the profits of the national lottery, the fund distribution and the prize distribution? In particular, can such an inquiry consider ways of allowing some revenue funding, so that in my constituency, for example, school sports facilities can stay open during the summer and take children off the streets?

The Prime Minister: There were several different parts to the hon. Lady's question. I welcome the support that she has given to the national lottery from the outset, but I do not find any real need for an independent inquiry. The profits are governed by the legislation that the House passed, and the lottery has so far raised well over £600 million for good causes. I should like to consider the distribution between capital and revenue at some time, but it would not be right to do so until we have had rather more experience of the lottery. Although many people are concerned about the size of the prizes when the lottery has been rolled over and there are very large sums indeed, I must tell the House that, whenever that has happened, contributions have risen dramatically, and with them the

available funds to be distributed to the five good causes—arts, sport, charities, the millennium fund and heritage—so I do not think it right to revisit that question at present.

Q4. **Mr. Streeter:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June. [26461]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Streeter: Has my right hon. Friend seen the recent disturbing reports of fraud and corruption in Hackney council? As independent inquiries appear to be the flavour of the afternoon, is it not now time to set up an independent and open inquiry into the growing number of cases of alleged malpractice and corruption in Labour councils all over the country?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is right about the flavour of the afternoon and also about the fact that there seem to be a number of cases where there are difficulties within Labour local authorities. There has been no suggestion from the Labour party of any inquiry, except one by the party behind closed doors. I know that Lord Nolan may be considering investigating local government generally. Personally, I hope that is where he will turn his attentions next, and I hope that the official Opposition will give him their support when he does so.

Q5. **Ms Eagle:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June. [26462]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Lady to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Ms Eagle: Will the Prime Minister take the opportunity this afternoon to reject unequivocally the malicious criticisms made of his record on television last night by Baroness Thatcher, or will he be setting up a committee of inquiry to establish the facts before he decides to take any action?

The Prime Minister: I worked with my right hon. and noble Friend for many years and I wish her well with her new book. I did not see the broadcast to which the hon. Lady refers, but, if there are misconceptions in it, no doubt in some years to come I shall correct them in my memoirs.

Sir Terence Higgins: Will my right hon. Friend take time today to study the evidence in the Nolan committee report that, over the past 30 years, average real incomes in Britain rose by 80 per cent.? In the meantime, the pay of Members of Parliament is only back where it was 30 years ago, and it has been below that level throughout the intervening period, while ministerial pay has gone down by 60 per cent. In view of that, will my right hon. Friend refer to the Nolan committee urgently the question of Members' and Ministers' pay?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend quotes some extremely telling statistics which are known to many hon. Members. I am not sure whether that is directly a matter for Lord Nolan; however, I shall myself take note of what my right hon. Friend says.

Q6. **Mr. Pickthall:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June. [26463]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Pickthall: Does the Prime Minister recall agreeing with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition that it is the business of Government to help to reduce inequality? In that context, what is his response to recent reports that some Oxford colleges are warning young people not to bother applying unless their parents are rich enough to fund them? What can he do to prevent Oxbridge again becoming a preserve of the rich? How does he justify Oxbridge colleges getting £2,000 per student in extra top-up tuition fees?

The Prime Minister: I do not accept the position set out by the hon. Gentleman in the case of Oxbridge or more generally. The reality for all people on low incomes across the country is that the average income of all family types has risen over recent years. Pensioner incomes have increased by more than 50 per cent. and average incomes have risen for those who are unemployed and others not in work. *[Interruption.]* It is all very well for Opposition Front Benchers to disagree, but if they cared to study some of the independent research, they would see that it shows that the least well-off have shared in the increase in prosperity. The Institute of Fiscal Studies shows that the standard of living measured by expenditure for the lowest tenth has increased by 14 per cent. As the hon. Gentleman mentioned poverty, he might be aware that the bottom income decile—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order. The Prime Minister will be heard in the House. I will have order.

The Prime Minister: I know that the Opposition do not like their misconceptions corrected, but they are going to have them corrected none the less. The bottom income decile has experienced improvement in income, improvement in consumer durables and improvement of living standards, year after year.

Q7. **Mr. Peter Bottomley:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June. [26464]

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bottomley: As my right hon. Friend was not able to watch television last night, may I tell him that one of the subjects covered in an interview with his predecessor was housing? May I suggest to him that people trying to get on to the housing ladder benefit by having low housing prices, relatively low interest rates and the opportunity to join in the property-owning democracy, and will he continue policies directed to that end?

The Prime Minister: There has been, as my hon. Friend will know, a dramatic increase in home ownership in the past few years, and there was a further increase again last year. As the House should know—although perhaps not everyone will wish to acknowledge it—mortgage payments are about £130 a month lower than they were in October 1990. Perhaps more pertinently, as a proportion of average income they are now at their lowest for a decade. I think that shows very clearly the prospects for increasing home ownership in future.

BMARC

3.30 pm

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): I wish to make a statement about the defence manufacturer BMARC and the export of naval guns and ammunition to Iran, via Singapore, during the late 1980s. My statement is prompted by three questions asked by the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson). The questions asked my Department when my Department was informed about allegations that Singapore was a conduit for arms exported by BMARC to Iran; which BMARC contracts were notified as being potentially in breach of export controls; and what assessment I had made of any breaches of export control by BMARC. In April, my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology and I were not satisfied that we had sufficient information to answer those questions properly. I therefore asked officials in my Department to do further research. I am now in a position to report to the House.

It may help hon. Members if I start by setting out the role of different Government Departments in export control matters. My Department is the licensing authority for export control. The Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office advise the Department of Trade and Industry on military applications. However, the investigation of export control offences is a matter for the independent investigator and prosecutor, Customs and Excise. The responsibility of my Department is to pass to it any relevant information that may assist its decision whether an investigation is warranted. The DTI has already made available to Customs and Excise all the information that has emerged as a result of my inquiries.

It may also be helpful if I set out briefly the relevant corporate history of BMARC. BMARC was owned by the Swiss defence contractor Oerlikon until May 1988, when it was acquired by the United Kingdom firm, Astra. After Astra bought BMARC in May 1988, BMARC continued to manufacture equipment to meet orders from Oerlikon.

In order to answer the parliamentary questions, I commissioned detailed research into two aspects: first, the intelligence information available to the Government; and secondly, the export licensing history.

I shall now answer the question as to the intelligence available to the Government. In 1986, intelligence was obtained that Iran had concluded a contract with Oerlikon for the supply of weaponry and ammunition. The intelligence picture developed in 1987, when it was revealed that naval guns made by Oerlikon had been offered to Iran by a company in Singapore. In July and September 1988, two intelligence reports rounded out the picture by referring to naval guns and ammunition being supplied by Oerlikon through Singapore to Iran. Important detail in one of the 1988 reports was identical to some of that mentioned in the 1986 intelligence. I must emphasise that none of the intelligence reports mentioned BMARC.

As to the export licensing history, during the period 1986-88 BMARC, in relation to orders from Oerlikon that were enclosed with the licence forms, sought and obtained United Kingdom export licences for the export of similar naval guns and ammunition to Singapore. Two of those export licence applications by BMARC to Singapore, for naval guns in 1986, which were subsequently approved, referred to a project that had also been mentioned in the 1986 intelligence.

It is for customs to investigate breaches of export control. However, it does appear that there may be grounds for believing that the final destination of naval cannon made by BMARC could well have been Iran, given that intelligence reports during the period mentioned equipment similar to that for which BMARC secured export licences for Singapore.

The events that I have outlined occurred six to nine years ago. I have concluded, however, that connections should have been made between the intelligence reports naming Oerlikon and the BMARC licence applications made in support of orders from Oerlikon. It would not have been possible for officials in my Department to take account of the 1986 intelligence, as it had not been distributed to the Department of Trade and Industry. However, the DTI failed to make a connection between any export licence applications by BMARC and Oerlikon's trade with Iran mentioned in the 1988 intelligence, which was distributed to the DTI. I understand that the relevant intelligence has now been passed to customs, as the investigating authority. Arrangements for the distribution and handling of intelligence, both generally and in the DTI, have been substantially improved since 1988.

I now refer to allegations made by the former chairman of Astra, Mr. Gerald James. He made allegations about the involvement of BMARC in a project called Lisi. According to Mr. James's evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee, which was looking into exports to Iraq, that was to supply

"medium calibre armaments—ammunition, weapons and tooling to Singapore for onward transmission to Iran".

Those allegations were first drawn to my Department's attention in March 1991, when the company inspectors looking into the affairs of Astra informed the DTI of the allegations made by Mr. James. Those same allegations were repeated by Mr. James in his written evidence to the Trade and Industry Select Committee, and were then passed by my Department to Customs and Excise in November 1991. At that time, customs came to the view that the allegations, which were made in association with a number of other allegations by Mr. James and which it believed to be unsupported, did not justify initiating a full investigation.

Earlier this year there were allegations that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was aware of those contracts during his period as a non-executive director of BMARC between September 1988 and March 1990. My right hon. Friend has already made his position clear in a statement to the House during Treasury questions on 30 March, when he said that he was never given any indication or information that could suggest that BMARC's contract with Singapore might subsequently result in components being shipped to Iran.

Let me refer to two additional matters raised by the results of the detailed inquiries that my Department has undertaken.

First, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement answered two related questions on 25 April 1995 from the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North about the export of arms to Iran by BMARC. In the light of the further research that has now been carried out, my right hon. Friend has today written to the hon. Member for Cunninghame, North providing supplementary information on the handling within the Ministry of Defence of the available intelligence and BMARC's export licences for Singapore.

[Mr. Michael Heseltine]

Secondly, an official in my Department wrote on 5 April to the private secretary to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary about the information available in my Department in the late 1980s about the destination of those exports. The letter was based on information believed then to be accurate. But the detailed inquiries which I subsequently set in hand, and which I have described to the House today, now show a different picture.

In preparing an answer to a recent parliamentary question from the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins), I asked my officials to look at the state of export licences in general over this period. I have had a check done on the number of applications by BMARC in the period 1986 to 1989 that enclosed the full supporting documentation, by which I mean end-user certificates, end-use statements or international import certificates. That showed that 36 per cent. of BMARC applications did not enclose the full supporting documentation, although I should add that the application form itself requires exporters to state the end user of the goods.

I have commissioned a sample survey of military list licence applications over a similar period, which suggests that, on average, 74 per cent. of all applications during the same period did not include the full supporting documentation. I must emphasise that that is supporting documentation. It would be entirely wrong to assume from the figures that I have given that a large proportion of exporters misled the Department. The survey has been passed to Customs and Excise.

The difficulties faced by the Export Licensing Unit in the late 1980s had already been made plain to the Trade and Industry Select Committee in 1991. They also featured in Sir Richard Scott's inquiry with regard to exports to Iraq. The failure of the Export Licensing Unit to insist in the past that full documentation was provided can, in part, be put down to the increase in licence applications, which doubled between the start of 1984 and the end of 1985, and reached a peak of 97,842 in 1987, placing a severe strain on the Export Licensing Unit.

My Department has already set out in answer to the Trade and Industry Select Committee the improvements made in export licensing practice. Action has been taken to ensure proper oversight of current licence applications by licensing staff, including a requirement in all cases for a full and unambiguous statement of the intended end use and end user.

As I explained to the House, the information relating to the licence applications by BMARC has been passed to Customs and Excise, to consider whether any export control offences may have been committed. It would not be appropriate for me to comment further.

On the more general issues relating to export licensing and the use of intelligence material, the Government will, of course, wish to consider carefully the recommendations from Sir Richard Scott's inquiry. In the meantime, and in the light of parliamentary interest in this particular matter, my Department would be very ready to co-operate if the Trade and Industry Select Committee wished to examine the issues raised by the allegation that Singapore was used as a conduit for arms exported by BMARC to Iran.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): It is to the great credit of my hon. Friends the Members for Cunninghame, North (Mr. Wilson) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) that this statement has been made today because, without their persistence in questioning the President of the Board of Trade, this latest fiasco of negligence and incompetence on the part of Ministers, and not just officials—I emphasise that—would never have come to light.

Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that the background to the astonishing story that he has revealed today is the guidelines announced to the House on the sale of arms by the then Foreign Secretary, Lord Howe? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that Lord Howe said:

"We should maintain our consistent refusal to supply . . . lethal equipment to either side"

in the Iran-Iraq war, that:

"We should not, in future, approve orders for any defence equipment which, in our view, would significantly enhance the capability of either side to prolong or exacerbate the conflict"

and finally, and most devastatingly, that the Government would, in line with this policy,

"continue to scrutinise rigorously all applications for export licences"?—[*Official Report*, 29 October 1985; Vol. 84, c. *450.*]

Of course, we know that, far from upholding any of those guidelines, Ministers and officials covertly ignored them all—that is the reality revealed by the right hon. Gentleman's statement.

Is not it also odd that the right hon. Gentleman said that on some occasions intelligence about those deals was given to his Department but that, on other occasions, intelligence was withheld? The House is entitled to ask what really was going on in the Government at this time when, publicly, we were said to be denying weapons of war to Iran and Iraq but, privately, Ministers were conniving in their supply?

How is it that the right hon. Gentleman's Department apparently did not know about such things while Mr. Alan Clark, then Minister of State for Defence Procurement, told my hon. Friend the Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers) in December 1990:

"Shortly after acquiring PRB, Astra Holdings plc consulted the MOD about certain contracts which the company had inherited through its acquisition."—[*Official Report*, 18 December 1990; Vol. 183, c. *133.*]

Was that information, too, withheld by his colleagues in the Ministry of Defence from the Department of Trade and Industry? Would the right hon. Gentleman like to explain that to the House? How is it that one Government Department knew of the sensitivity and implications of those contracts while apparently another one did not?

How is it that Mr. Gerald James, the former chairman, was able to say, and substantiate the fact with documents, that anyone would have to be blind and deaf not to know that arms were going to Iran from BMARC? Are our intelligence services all blind and deaf? Are our officials all blind and deaf? Of course, Mr. James was referring specifically to a non-executive director of his company who subsequently became Minister of State for Defence Procurement. That says something about prime ministerial judgment, does it not? Of course, the reference is to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Why was it that apparently throughout this time, the Ministers responsible were not asking any searching questions of their officials about the course of events?

Once again, not because of any honesty on the part of the Government, or because of any desire for openness, and certainly not because of any competence on their part,

the House and the country have learnt of yet another scandal—another piece of unvarnished Government duplicity. And the credit for these revelations goes to my hon. Friends, not the President.

Mr. Heseltine: The right hon. Gentleman is entitled to recognise the seriousness of the matter. That is why I have taken the extremely unusual step of making an oral statement in reply to written parliamentary questions. But he has overstated the case and in many ways misrepresented what I have put to the House.

The right hon. Gentleman referred to the guidelines which, as he rightly says, it was the Government's clear intention to implement. It is because that was the Government's intention that there were at one time 97,000 licence applications. Nothing is clearer than the fact that the Government had put in place a system designed to implement the guidelines.

It is also beyond question—this is not news to the House—that the arrangements did not prove to be watertight, but that fact is being explored and examined by Sir Richard Scott. This issue overlaps with his inquiry—hence the number of licences is as relevant to this case as it is to the Scott inquiry, which is dealing with matters relating to Iraq.

I do not believe that Ministers "connived". I have seen no evidence to support that view. There is a world of difference between saying that people deliberately connived or covertly ignored and the other apparent interpretation of the evidence that I have put to the House: which is that the system was on such a scale that a limited number of issues escaped the net and connections were not made in every case as a result of intelligence that might have been differently interpreted.

I must tell the right hon. Gentleman, however, that his interpretation, and the extreme language that he used, will not, on mature reflection, prove to have been justified.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): Is my right hon. Friend aware that the House will recognise that he was absolutely right to come and make the full statement that he has made today? Some of the events to which he refers took place nine years ago, and at one time about 90,000 export licence applications were involved; and certain companies—some of them foreign with British subsidiaries—were trying to avoid the export licence requirements.

My right hon. Friend is nevertheless correct to suggest that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry investigate the matter further. The new Intelligence and Security Committee has already been examining the use made of our intelligence, and whether the Government Departments that are its customers are fully apprised of any information that intelligence may have. Is my right hon. Friend therefore aware that I think it right—without prejudice to the views of my colleagues on the Committee—that although the Trade and Industry Select Committee, with its responsibilities for DTI export licensing, should look further into the matter, the Intelligence and Security Committee will be interested in doing so as well?

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend. I say at once that my Department would co-operate with any inquiry that he saw fit to establish in the name of his Committee. He will, I hope, find that we have done a great deal to tackle the dissemination of intelligence since these events took place; but this is an important matter and I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's views.

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): Did it really need expensively gathered intelligence to make clear to Ministers the fairly obvious point that Singapore was hardly a credible end destination for any of these items? Who in the Government is prepared to take responsibility for that obvious oversight? As the Department has responsibility for company directors, will the right hon. Gentleman authorise an independent inquiry into the amount of knowledge held by all the directors of the board of the company, and into why they thought that the end destination was Singapore?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will have heard me say that I have referred all matters of which I am currently aware to the enforcement authority, Customs and Excise. It is its responsibility now to make such decisions.

Sir Cranley Onslow (Woking): Whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter might turn out to be—I do not believe that my right hon. Friend is wrong in telling people not to leap to the kind of conclusions that the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) is so anxious to draw—my right hon. Friend clearly deserves to be commended for the way in which he has handled this very difficult matter.

In response to my right hon. Friend's comments about the Trade and Industry Select Committee, may I say, as a member of that Committee, that I hope very much that it will agree to resume its previous inquiries and that it will do so as soon as possible?

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to my right hon. Friend. If his views prove to be those of the Committee of which he is a distinguished member, my Department will offer full co-operation.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Does the President of the Board of Trade agree that if 36 per cent. of BMARC's military export licences were not properly filled in, it was in breach of the export control order system, and that his own Department has conspired and colluded in that breach of the export control orders? Will the right hon. Gentleman ask himself these questions: who knew; and who benefited? How is the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) ever to clear his name in the face of this disgrace, this dishonour and these deceits? Is it not time for Scott II?

Mr. Heseltine: I think that the hon. Gentleman will wish to reflect carefully on what he said, because, if I remember correctly, the figures that I gave the House for the number of BMARC applications, and for the other applications, were for the period that included times when my right hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) was not a member of the board of the company concerned, so what the House is considering is an extension of the evidence that is already before Sir Richard Scott.

We understand—it has been clearly discussed and ventilated—the fact that, under the strain of the pressures of scale, the licensing system was not as effectively administered as one would have liked with hindsight. It is important to recognise that the forms may have contained the information, but the supporting documents were not, in the cases to which I referred, available in every case. That is the issue, but it was quite clear from the survey that I carried out—it was a sample; I can say no more

[Mr. Heseltine]

than that—that there was no special treatment for BMARC. Indeed, from the survey, it appears that the position for the average company was a great deal less satisfactory than it was for BMARC.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): The former BMARC factory at Faldingworth is in my constituency. May I congratulate my right hon. Friend on a very candid and comprehensive statement today? Is he aware, however, that trade union officials, in conversations that I have had with them at that site, have made it absolutely clear to me that no member of the staff there, or in their view a non-executive director, such as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary, would have had or could have had any knowledge of the end destination of the goods?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for what he has had to say. He will know that what he has said is consistent with what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has already told the House.

Mr. Allan Rogers (Rhondda): The President of the Board of Trade will be aware that, between 1989 and 1992, I tabled a series of written questions to his Department and to the Secretaries of State for Defence and for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Indeed, I wrote to the Prime Minister on this issue. Every one of the answers denied that there were exports of arms into Iran and Iraq, through Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia or anywhere else—even South Africa.

In view of the statement that the President of the Board of Trade made today, will he look back on the answers to those questions and perhaps rectify them? He has stated that the Department responsible for prosecutions or for investigating breaches of export control is Customs and Excise. Following the couple of referrals that he has made, has any action been taken by Customs and Excise? And who is the Minister responsible for Customs and Excise? Is it the Chief Secretary to the Treasury?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will himself wish to look at any parliamentary questions that have, in his view, been answered potentially inaccurately. If he wishes to table them again, we shall of course consider them fully.

Mr. Rogers: I did five years ago.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman makes the very point. We are dealing with a long period of time and a large number of licences. It is, I hope, for the Select Committee to investigate the issues that might arise. The cost of asking officials to check through all those licences, over all that time, would have to be weighed against the public interest in the likely evidence that might emerge. I have made it as clear as I can that my Department will co-operate in any way that is possible; but, as the House knows, Customs and Excise is an independent prosecuting authority.

Mr. Stephen Byers (Wallsend): In the light of today's statement, will the President of the Board of Trade urge his right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury to disclose the evidence that he has given the Scott inquiry concerning his role as a director of BMARC? Will he confirm that the details that he has disclosed to us this afternoon concerning BMARC are contained in documents that were subject to a public interest immunity certificate signed by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 2 or 3 September 1992, when he was Minister of State for Defence Procurement?

Does the President of the Board of Trade accept that there will be widespread concern about the fact that the Chief Secretary to the Treasury was prepared to see the innocent directors of Matrix Churchill go to gaol rather than disclose documents that would have been politically damaging to him?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman raises serious points, but in raising them now he ought to have referred to the fact that those matters have been exhaustively considered by the Scott inquiry, and that my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has dealt specifically with them. It will now be for Sir Richard Scott to publish, as he sees fit, any comments that he considers appropriate.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): The President of the Board of Trade has told the House twice that, in his opinion, connections should have been made with the earlier intelligence information. Will he now specify who should have made the connections, why they did not do so and what, in his opinion, should happen to them now? Does he consider that the line of responsibility for this failure of policy stops with officials or with Ministers?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has raised the very question that I think a Select Committee would explore. The House is fully aware, however, that Ministers do not make decisions about the disciplining of civil servants; that is a matter that the permanent secretaries of the individual Departments would have to address.

As for ministerial responsibility, the issue that would be explored is whether Ministers knew that these events were taking place. How Ministers could have known that the situation was developing, in the circumstances, is for subsequent examination. I have given the House the information that is currently available to me, but it was clear from what I had to say that until very recently the facts that I have revealed today were not widely understood.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that some of the accusations and innuendos that Opposition Members have delivered today in regard to my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury are a disgrace? Is it not a fact that my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has already said, in a public statement to the House and outside, that he will co-operate fully with the Scott inquiry, and that Lord Justice Scott is the correct person to investigate those matters?

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury has made a statement to the House about this matter, and I think that that is the most substantial evidence that he could be expected to produce.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Is it not now requisite upon the Prime Minister, in view of the sleaze-stained record of his Government, that he establish yet another public inquiry—this time into the extraordinary obtuseness of his Ministers?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman has failed to realise that it was not my right hon. Friend's Government.

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): May I seek clarification from the President of the Board of Trade? Is he really saying that this crucial matter of national security involving the export of arms to an illegitimate destination is all a matter for civil servants and is nothing to do with him, that he should not have known and that ministerial responsibility is out of the window?

Mr. Heseltine: I did not say that. I merely said that if there were an inquiry by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry into this specific matter, which I have said I would welcome, these things would become clearer. At that stage, we could have the debate that the hon. Gentleman has suggested.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): In the light of today's statement by the President of the Board of Trade, will my constituent Mr. Gerald James now be offered an apology for all the leaking by Government Departments, Ministers and civil servants against him, and for the assassination of his character in the past three years as he insisted that he was right in his allegations? As it was he who stated in 1990 that, when Astra took over BMARC in 1988, he found that it was running a secret order book that was being managed by three other directors of the company, and as everything that has been said today points to the fact that his allegations at that time were true, does he not deserve an apology and should he not receive one?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is fully aware that, as I said in my statement, those matters are being considered by the investigating authorities. It is not for me to try to double-guess or to influence those authorities in any way.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): The President of the Board of Trade said earlier that it was not for Ministers to discipline civil servants. Was it not the President of the Board of Trade who, in another guise—that of the Secretary of State for Defence—hounded Clive Ponting out of a job?

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): And he told the truth.

Mr. Skinner: Yes. In this seedy affair, is it not time that some ministerial heads rolled? Why is it that the arrogant Government we have now seem to think that they are not responsible for anything? When will someone have the guts to resign?

Mr. Heseltine: As on so many other occasions, the hon. Gentleman's memory has failed him. I came to the House with a full explanation of what happened at that time and the House supported me in what I had to say.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Pursuant to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours), I have in my hand a letter of 12 June from his constituent Gerald James, who has recently been in ill health. Does it do the House of Commons or the Government any credit to say, "Wait until Scott"? May we have an answer here and now to the question whether Gerald James did tell the truth and persons in government—I am being very cautious; it would be wrong to express an opinion as to who—suppressed the truth? In fairness to that individual, who has been in contact with many Members of Parliament on both sides of the House, should there not be a statement about his position before Sir Richard Scott reports? Indeed, it is astonishing to some of us that Sir Richard Scott is supposed to be the vehicle that considers such complicated matters, which some of us would have thought were outside his original remit.

Mr. Heseltine: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that, having set up an independent inquiry and having independent enforcement agencies, it would be wrong for a Minister to anticipate conclusions that they have not yet reached.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): In respect of the allegations being made against the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the President of the Board of Trade says that we must await Sir Richard Scott's report. Does he not recognise that there is a problem, in that the Scott inquiry was set up to look into arms to Iraq, whereas BMARC concerns arms to Iran and Sir Richard Scott has said that there is a problem about that?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman is perfectly right, but I was referring to a wide range of issues, including the dissemination of intelligence and the licensing system, both of which are being considered by Sir Richard Scott. In addition to my reference to the Scott inquiry, I referred to the responsibilities of Customs and Excise and the possibility that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry and now, as we heard, the Intelligence and Security Committee, might take an interest in the matter.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): Does not the President of the Board of Trade accept that the matter goes much wider than form filling, or the lack of it, in the Department of Trade and Industry? At the time, the House was given assurances—to me and to other hon. Members—about the guidelines being rigorously enforced. Ministers presided over a period when war was raging between Iran and Iraq and there was a sudden increase in demands for export licences made to Government Departments in this country for innocent places such as Singapore. Did no one in the Government put two and two together?

Mr. Heseltine: Again, those are matters that would be explored by the Trade and Industry Select Committee. I have asked such questions myself. There are complications. The House will be as surprised as I was to hear about one of the reasons why the licences increased on such a scale. It was not the result of the issues that we are discussing today, but because of the technological advances that took place in such things as laptop computers, which meant a huge increase in the number of pieces of equipment for which business people had to apply for licences. That was one reason for the large increase in the number of applications—*[Interruption.]* I must say that it is intolerable that when one comes to the House to explain a matter of this importance, all one gets from the Opposition is sniggering indifference to the real subject under debate.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): I presume that the President of the Board of Trade presides over the Board of Trade. It seems odd that, in defending the figure of 36 per cent. of BMARC applications, he referred to an even worse figure—74 per cent., I think, of all applications. Is it reasonable to assume that those included applications for other countries for which there

[Mr. Andrew Miller]

should be arms embargoes—or, at least, the Government state that there are embargoes? As part of his review, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that he researches recent parliamentary questions about other countries for which there are arms embargoes and that the House gets the truth about the situation affecting other countries involved, in particular Burma and Iraq?

Mr. Heseltine: It is because I was so concerned that the House should have the whole story that I made this oral statement. If the hon. Gentleman has further specific questions for me, I shall do my best to give him accurate answers.

Mr. Mike O'Brien (Warwickshire, North): The House will note that, when given the opportunity to do so by the hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), the right hon. Gentleman declined to defend the role of the Chief Secretary to the Treasury in all this. Does the President of the Board of trade accept that the added evidence that he has presented to the House today of the fiasco surrounding the guidelines for the export of arms to Iran and Iraq adds great weight to the claims of my constituents and others in the Coventry area, who were deprived of their jobs as a result of intervention in Matrix Churchill, for proper compensation for them and for the directors who lost their jobs as a result of the failure of Government policy in that whole area?

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman will know that I and many of my colleagues have given evidence to the Scott inquiry and we look forward to what he has to say.

Mr. Brian Wilson (Cunninghame, North): Before the Secretary of State cloaks himself in too much virtue for coming here, will he confirm that this morning, before we were informed that there was to be a statement, I tabled a further written parliamentary question asking why I had not received the letter that was promised to me on 28 April and when the Secretary of State intended to write to me? Does he accept that if we were to believe everything in this statement, the Government would seem to be the classic Government of wise monkeys who see no evil and hear no evil to a quite remarkable extent? Does he accept that, as far back as 1990, the Ministry of Defence seized files from Astra, the owner of BMARC, as part of a fraud investigation? Those files referred to Astra and BMARC trade with Iraq and Iran. Were the files handed to the DTI then? If not, why not? If they were, why have we had to wait five years for this statement?

The Secretary of State referred to the fact that the ship of state was not watertight in respect of these issues. Does he accept that that is something of an understatement? It is a distinguishing feature that, until a few minutes ago, the captain of the ship was sitting next to one of the chief saboteurs. Does he also accept that this is not so much a matter for Select Committees, but one of old-fashioned integrity, which requires resignations? Is not the truth that BMARC knew that lethal equipment was being sold illegally to Iran via Singapore, that the DTI knew that arms were being sold illegally to Iran via Singapore and that Ministers knew that the right hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) knew that such arms were being sold illegally to Iran?

May we have a far more wide-reaching inquiry than anything that has been suggested today? The Secretary of State should be absolutely clear that this is not a matter for any previous Government. It is a matter for this Government, including every right hon. and hon. Member who sits on the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Heseltine: The hon. Gentleman apparently tabled a parliamentary question today. I had no knowledge of that. If he tabled it today, how could I possibly have knowledge of it? It is a novel idea that the Table Office should telephone me to say that a question has been tabled. I am a bit out of touch with such things because I have not tabled any questions for some time, but I thought that the procedure was that questions were tabled at the Table Office and not in Departments. If the hon. Gentleman were so anxious to convey the urgency of the matter to me, he might have done me the courtesy of writing to me in my Department. Perhaps then I would have known about it.

The hon. Gentleman must decide what he wants. He tabled parliamentary questions, and we have conducted a very detailed examination into a range of very serious matters. I presume that that is what he would have wanted us to do. That is why we have not answered his questions. As soon as I was in a position to answer his questions, I came to the House. It is pure coincidence that he tabled a parliamentary question today.

The question of the files in connection with Astra, as I understand it, was to do with the prosecution of a former BMARC director and arose from the particular issue of the MOD police raids that took place. Again, those matters must be considered in the total context. I have tried to answer as accurately as I can the questions that the hon. Gentleman put to me.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(3) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

EDUCATION

That the Education (Fees and Awards) (Amendment) Regulations 1995 (S.I., 1995, No.1241) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

Question agreed to.

Electoral Reform

4.17 pm

Mr. Paul Flynn (Newport, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to control parliamentary election expenses within limits set nationally and in each constituency; to establish a national registration system for political parties; to require companies who donate to parties to establish accountable political funds; and for connected purposes.

Our general election system is potentially corrupt. It can be—and almost certainly has been—abused by the rich, the powerful and criminals to buy influence and honours from political parties. The law places strict limits on all election moneys that are spent in local areas on saying, "Vote for Blair" or, "Vote for Major", but there are no controls whatever on moneys spent on saying, "Vote Labour" or, "Vote Conservative".

Vast sums have increasingly been spent on so-called national spending and have been concentrated in the 150 constituencies where elections are won and lost. For every pound spent in constituencies, £8 is spent nationally. The Bill seeks to limit such spending, ban secret overseas donations, make the accounts of political parties transparent, restore some credibility to the honours system and stop attempts by companies such as Imperial Tobacco to subvert Government policy for its own anti-social ends.

Today, I had the pleasure of welcoming to Parliament representatives of the Latvian Saema. We take great pride in our democracy and claim that it is the mother of democracies, but our system is long overdue for a great deal of care and maintenance. In that area, we are in a foolish position. For more than 100 years, we rigidly controlled local spending by candidates and had severe penalties for overspenders. Having introduced reforms to control bribing and treating, an aberration in the law in 1974 allowed parties to spend unlimited amounts.

While the law frets about the minnows of spending, the fat salmon go by unhindered. The Bill is supported by all Opposition parties and even a progressive group in the Conservative party seeks such reforms.

There is no better example of the abuses that have occurred than of Imperial Tobacco's handing over of 2,000 poster sites to the Conservative party in 1992. In a letter to me, its marketing manager explained why. He said:

"Labour and Liberal Democrats had said they would support a ban on tobacco advertising. Speaking as a tobacco company we'd like to see the Conservative party re-elected because we believe they will continue to oppose the advertising ban."

The Conservatives have delivered on that.

Nothing in the future prevents any person or company, here or abroad, or even any country, however malign their interest might be, from spending unlimited millions—billions, if they want—on campaigning for any party. If not yet corrupted, our system certainly invites corruption. Vote buying has returned to British elections. Scandals have involved many parties, including the Labour party, to which, it has been claimed, people with criminal records or criminal intent, such as Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Costas, have given money. It has been claimed that Hong Kong business men have contributed to the Conservative party—that Sir Yue-Kong Pao gave £1 million and that Li Ka-Shing contributed £100,000. It has been claimed that two fugitives from British justice, Mr. Asil Nadir and Mr. Octav Botnar, contributed £440,000 and £1 million respectively to the Conservative party, and we know of the case of Mr. Mohamed Fayed.

It is a great shame that the Select Committee on Home Affairs did not produce the answers that the House wanted. First, it sought not to have the investigation and then to delay and weaken it by denying witnesses to the House, including witnesses from the Conservative party. It did Parliament no service whatever by producing an anodyne report that did not deal with a serious problem. It is a great tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin), that he produced, in an amendment, a splendid report that gives us some practical reforms for the future.

The case of Mr. Asil Nadir is even more worrying because it reveals that the sums he gave the Conservative party had been channelled through firms abroad and that the Conservative party was not clear what its sources were. In a statement, the former Treasurer, Lord McAlpine, claimed that Asil Nadir had met him in 1991 and tried to persuade him to ensure that criminal charges against him would be dropped. It was suggested that that would be in return for the donations he had made to the Conservative party.

I have other examples of how money is used subversively. There is a correlation between the sums of money given by companies and the honours that members of those companies have received in the system. The figures have been given to the House on many occasions. The rate for peerages seems to be about £500,000 and that for knighthoods seems to be about £250,000. It is disgraceful that our democracy should be so besmirched by such practices.

It should be the duty of all right hon. and hon. Members to ensure that we put democracy back on an even keel. We must stop what is now going on. It is possible for democracy to be subverted by the wealthy, the powerful, the criminal and those—such as tobacco companies—who want to use their contributions for purposes that are contrary to the interests of the people and to buy their own or their party's way to power. I commend the Bill to the House.

4.24 pm

Mr. David Shaw (Dover): I oppose the Bill because it is one-sided. Labour and the trade unions were hardly mentioned by the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn), and the structure that would result from the proposals in the Bill would be open to abuse. The Bill would bring political parties under the control of the state and the Government of the day, and we would have no democracy. The proposals would lead to state funding of political parties, which is what Labour's 1992 manifesto called for. I believe that the Bill is based on a fundamental misconception about the financing of the Conservative party.

The hon. Member for Newport, West failed to open up the mysteries of trade union and Labour party funding, but we can find many secret arrangements the Labour party puts together to get funds from as many different sources as possible. What we find is that the trade unions own and control the Labour party and its finances. We find in the accounts of the Labour party that 70 per cent. of funding comes from the trade unions directly.

We cannot find the major donors from the Labour party's accounts, but, by going to the trade union accounts, we can discover that four or five major unions

give

[Mr. David Shaw]

£1 million pounds apiece to the Labour party. I wish that the Conservative party could rely on four or five people to donate £1 million apiece, election after election. It is easy for the leader of the Labour party to raise money. He just has to make four or five telephone calls, and £1 million turns up as a result of each.

The Labour party has a problem, and that is what lies behind the Bill. Membership of the Labour party has not been going up, as the publicity machine would have us believe. If one reads the accounts carefully, we see that the party is not taking off the list people who are not paying their subscriptions. The Labour party's most recent accounts showed that contributions from the membership had gone down.

Writers who sell their books offshore—gosh knows where their money is, but it is not easily detectable onshore—and the pop stars who support the Labour party, we wonder how much of their money is onshore, may announce their support for the Labour party, but the accounts show that they are not donating very much and certainly not to the extent about which they sing and write.

The secrecy behind the Labour party's accounts is considerable. Although there is £4.7 million of direct financing, a large amount of indirect financing goes into what I call the off-balance sheet and off-profit and loss accounts. Some £2.2 million does not go to the main accounts, but directly to the general election funds. The Walworth road property arrangements—whereby the trade unions own that property—have been varied so that the rental agreement now covers the decorating and maintenance of the property by the tenant, the Labour party. The trade unions pick up the bill for that.

There is a business plan, in which £2 million a year is donated to the Labour party. People may ask whether that affects the control of the Labour party, and it is clear from the accounts that it does. The accounts suggest that the business plan is managed by a group of guarantor unions—the GMB, the Union of Communications Workers, the Graphical, Paper and Media Union, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers and the Transport and General Workers Union—which is defined as the control group. Therefore, I believe that they control the Labour party.

One area of the Labour party's financing is open and available for people to discover. It has taken a pensions holiday and not paid into its pension funds for the past two years. Some might think that the Labour party has "done a Maxwell" on its own pensioners.

The Labour party also sets up secret companies. A company called Common Campaign Ltd. was set up in August 1994 to finance newspaper advertising by the Labour party during the general election. That is outside Labour party rules, which require donations of £5,000 and more to be disclosed. The company was set up by Labour party supporters in an attempt to avoid such disclosure.

I have not much time to go into as much detail as I should like, but some further points need to be made. Not only do the trade unions, representing 8 million or fewer people, control the Labour party, they constitute a powerful group of organisations behind that party. Almost £1 billion in assets are shown in the trade union accounts. There is a £200 million annual cash flow, £300 million in directly owned assets and £400 million in pension fund assets. All those resources are used to help one political party when a general election comes, so there are almost £1 billion worth of assets behind the Labour party. The Conservative party's financing pales into insignificance in comparison.

The Walworth road development trust, which has recently been set up, receives a contribution of £244,000 in support from the GMB, and that does not even come from the GMB's political funds, but from its direct funds, so Conservative members of the union support that loan to the Labour party. The Labour party's business plan has been set, and the GMB has put a £75,000 general guarantee from its general funds behind that Labour party development plan.

Another form in which the Labour party gets help from the unions is grants to parliamentary candidates. The GMB donates £30,000 for those, and other unions make similar donations. Those are not only the national affiliation; the local affiliations of the GMB account for about £294,000. Other unions do likewise. The GMB's central Labour party affiliation accounts for more than £1 million.

Then there is the Labour party's by-election insurance fund, towards which the GMB also contributes, as it does to the Labour party conference. There is a sinister operation based in Walworth road called the trade unions for a Labour victory levy, with mysterious staff operating out of Labour party headquarters. The GMB alone contributes £94,000 to it.

Trade unions are contributing to the Labour party in all sorts of different ways. I have not had time to mention the 1992 general election, in which trade union advertising cost as much as the Conservative party spent, whereas the Labour party itself spent still more on advertising. NALGO spent £1 million on advertising alone, and the trade unions were happy because, in a confidential memorandum, it was said:

> "The evidence for both the 1987 and 1992 elections is that where there was well co-ordinated union involvement, involving many unions, with a co-ordinator in place early and with time to properly co-ordinate activities, then the election result was significantly better than average. An example of excellent union involvement was York . . . Croydon, North-West . . . Norwich, North".

In all those constituencies, the trade unions put in resources out of all proportion to the legal election funds and to anything that was allowed under the law. They put those resources together and provided extra money to get Labour candidates returned.

There are many reasons for opposing the Bill. The Labour party has lots of secret funds. Through its leader and its leadership, it gains money from the trade unions through all sorts of different accounts and in all sorts of different ways. The Conservative party must do everything to resist that, for the sake of democracy, because we are outgunned financially by a narrow band of people who are not widely representative.

When it is alleged that one gets a return from donating to the Conservative party, we should remember the words of Mr. Fayed, who said that he had given £250,000 but got nothing in return. That is evidence that, if one donates to the Conservative party, there is no guarantee of anything in return. One donor made that clear. If one donates to the Labour party, however, one has total control, according to the Labour party's own accounts. The Bill seeks to promote the Labour's party sources of

finance and funding and to make sure that the Conservative party has even more difficulty raising money. Labour goes in for secret financing—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order.

Question put, pursuant to Standing Order No. 19 (Motions for leave to bring in Bills and nomination of Select Committees at commencement of public business):—

The House proceeded to a Division.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington) (*seated and covered*): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for a Whip to bully a Conservative Back Bencher and stop him calling a Division of the House?

Madam Deputy Speaker: If there was an incident, I did not see it.

Question agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Paul Flynn, Mr. Nick Ainger, Mr. Jon Owen Jones, Mr. Paddy Tipping, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Dennis Turner and Mr. David Winnick.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Paul Flynn accordingly presented a Bill to control parliamentary election expenses within limits set nationally and in each constituency; to establish a national registration system for political parties; to require companies who donate to parties to establish accountable political funds; and for connected purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 July, and to be printed. [Bill 132.]

Opposition Day

[13TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Housing Market

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): I have to announce to the House that Madam Speaker has selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister.

4.38 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move,

That this House, concerned by the continuing depressed state of the housing market, the reduction in the building of houses for rent, and the impact this has on the construction industry, and recognising the plight of owner-occupiers trapped by negative equity and hard hit by rising housing costs, calls on the Government to abandon policies such as the proposals to limit the help available from income support with mortgage interest payments which can only reinforce insecurity and delay recovery.

There may be a little common ground between the two sides of the House, at least on the fact that the housing market has had a bad time and is struggling. Ministers put on brave smiles and there was talk of the recovery that the Prime Minister promised would start on the Friday after the last general election. The smiles have become a little forced over the months, as recovery limped into sight and then gave up. There has been no sustained growth and no bounce, and anyone looking at the scene at the moment must be worried.

The Halifax building society's house price index is down 1.5 per cent. in the year to April 1995. There has been a cumulative decline of 10 to 15 per cent. since 1990, which continues. There are almost 1,000 repossessions a week—about 50,000 a year. Depending on which figures one reads, between 700,000 and 1.2 million people may be trapped in negative equity.

Housing costs are increasing, partly as a result of interest rate increases, partly as a result of reductions in mortgage interest relief at source and partly as a result of income support mortgage interest withdrawal. The insurance tax adds minor insult to major injury in that respect.

The amount of rented accommodation built this year is the smallest in 50 years. Council rents have increased by three times the rate of inflation as a matter of Government policy. The homelessness figures continue to tell a tale of misery and despair.

There are times—I suppose that it is the law of averages—when I agree with the Prime Minister about something. He said, as recently as a week or two ago, that the crazy situation existing towards the end of the 1980s was one of the explanations for present discontent. I do not disagree with that, but I parted company from him when he added—I interpret loosely—"Not me, Guv," when it came to whose fault it was.

The Prime Minister may be interested to know that efforts have been made to try to find out what the public think about the matter. I am told that tomorrow, an ICM poll will be published in *The Guardian*, and that one of the questions that it asked was:

"In your view, who is most to blame for the fact that over 1 million people bought houses in the late 1980s which are now worth less than they paid for them?"

[Mr. Donald Dewar]

I concede right away that 12 per cent. of respondents said that they did not know, so I suppose one must allow something for public ignorance, but very many people replied, and most people had a clear opinion. Estate agents and the councils that sold the houses were held to be at fault by 6 per cent. of the sample. The people who bought them—that is the Prime Minister's favourite horse—were to blame according to 11 per cent. The banks and building societies who lent them their money were blamed by 13 per cent. The Government were blamed by a resounding 62 per cent.—home and dry by a straight.

So "Not me, Guv" begins to appear, at least in the public's opinion, a very odd defence. It may be worth reminding the House that, in the time when things went out of control, the man who became the Prime Minister was involved in those things regarding which the Prime Minister now points the finger of blame. It is also worth recalling that the Economic Secretary to the Treasury between June 1987 and July 1989 and the Financial Secretary to the Treasury between July 1989 and July 1990, the guilty period, was presumably one of the guilty men—the present Secretary of State for Social Security.

The one consolation—I am always anxious to bring good news—is that there was an opinion poll of the public asking who specifically, in terms of political names, was to blame, and the Secretary of State will be glad to know that he scored "nul points" in that poll. It is another triumph for the charisma that is his trademark.

Most people blame Lady Thatcher, which is hardly surprising. I watched Lady Thatcher on television last night, and I thought that she is starting to appear more and more like someone rehearsing for the part of Lady Bracknell in "The Importance of Being Earnest". I think the producer's opinion was, "It was a wonderful character vignette, my dear, but just a way over the top."

In any event, Lady Thatcher is noticed and remembered. The present Prime Minister, although very much involved in all that, scored only 7 per cent. in the poll, and his trouble is that he is almost all unnoticed, unremarked and largely anonymous, as he was on that occasion.

The specific problem in the late 1980s has been noticed by some of the more civilised members of the Government. Perhaps I should be careful damning him in that way, but the Secretary of State for National Heritage, a year or two ago, made an interesting speech in which he worried about the yuppie revolution and decided that it was built on sand:

> "The wheeler-dealer was the man of the moment. The best returns were to be found in trading financial assets. Demand for property seemed inexhaustible . . . But the system was giving the wrong signals. Far from being sure-fire winners, many were, in fact, sure-fire losers."

Very properly, the Secretary of State was, by implication, regretting the part of his Government in that bad time.

We should agree that we are paying a price, and it is ridiculous to shift blame on to the buyers of flats or semis, presumably on the rather twisted logic that they were rash enough to listen to the Government.

The past has its lessons. The problem is that the past is the past. More importantly, the current policy threatens to compound those past errors. Several factors appear to contribute to the present discontent, and the one common factor among them is that they are linked to Government policy.

The first factor, in terms of the construction industry alone in terms of house-building activity, is that the Government fail to allow the use of capital receipts to support and stimulate the construction industry. Firms, as everyone in the House knows who reads the financial pages, are lining up to point at and complain about that low rate of activity. Many have their feeling of frustration compounded by a sense of betrayal. They feel that they have been treated with ingratitude. In sociological terms, we may have a new phenomenon. It is called "McAlpine's grievance", and refers to the feeling that there was no reward for—no doubt at times painful—financial service to the party.

In any event, there is undoubtedly in this society a painful—to use the word again—lack of rented accommodation. There is a dispute about how much is available. The Government claim about £2 billion, but certainly substantial sums are available which I believe should be used in the way that I have suggested.

Mr. Den Dover (Chorley): The hon. Gentleman has mentioned the capital receipts in local authorities' bank accounts. In the past, I have supported the use of that money to upgrade old housing stock, but will the hon. Gentleman say what he would like those capital receipts to be used for? Does he accept that, if they are used, council tax rates in the various local authorities will have to increase because of the loss of interest on them?

Mr. Dewar: I am the last person to appeal to for expertise about English local government finance. It is to a certain extent a matter of discretion, but I should have thought that those capital receipts should be spent on major rehabilitation to try to save the crumbling existing stock and efforts to meet the undoubted lack of decent rented accommodation. Most of the property that fell into the latter category has been shifted out by right-to-buy sales, and in those circumstances it would be socially useful, and would make economic sense, to replace it. I hope that we shall continue to have the hon. Gentleman's support in that respect.

I want to discuss two specific aspects which are of some relevance, and I do so because they are both directly the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Social Security. The first is housing benefit, and I shall discuss that comparatively briefly.

There has been a spectacular increase in housing benefit. I believe that the total has doubled, or approximately doubled, since 1988 in real terms—it is increasing towards £8 billion—and the private sector has been especially problematical in that respect.

I do not think that anyone will disagree that that is a direct reflection of the Government's policy. It is linked to the switch of subsidy from bricks and mortar to the individual. It is also linked, to be fair, to recession and low wages, but the main cause has been Government policy. That has, to be fair, been very directly recognised by Ministers, for example, in "The Growth of Social Security", the publication for which the Secretary of State was responsible—I suppose it is now getting on for a year ago.

I am worried that the complex changes that are now being introduced, of which we do not know the details, will not make much of an impact on the problem. Of course we accept that, if there is abuse—if landlords are conniving to force up rents with their tenants, knowing that the taxpayer will pick up the bill—that is a problem.

As the House will know, rent officers have powers that allow them, when a case is referred to them—which in my part of the world is done in every private sector case—to judge whether there is exploitation of the type that I have described and ensure that housing benefit-applicable rents are limited.

Now we have a rather more complicated, but I am not sure—

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Would this be an appropriate moment for me to ask the hon. Gentleman for his opinion on the proposal of his colleague the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) for mortgage benefit, which I think is supported by the Commission for Social Justice? I recall that, when we last had one of these exchanges, the hon. Gentleman rather dismissed the Commission for Social Justice. Does he also dismiss the proposal of his hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich for mortgage benefit?

Mr. Dewar: I rather enjoy the hon. Gentleman's Uriah Heep approach and the obsequious way in which he slips his question into the debate. He has probably been practising hard in his constituency, which is highly marginal, but I fear that it will do him no good. I will certainly come to an appropriate point in a minute or two and I hope that the hon. Gentleman will wait rooted to his seat until then.

The new system involves average reference rents, which are calculated and based upon the size of dwelling units and not according to the type of dwelling units. That is one inflexibility. Once it has been set, that is the applicable amount for housing benefit purposes, plus half the difference between that figure and the appropriate rent determined by the rent officer. I do not think that that will prove a great weapon for progress.

If the local authority uses its discretion to meet that excess, will the Minister confirm whether it will have to do so from a cash-limited fund which is 0.3 per cent of the local authority's private sector benefit expenditure? Is there not a very real and almost inevitable danger that, in that situation, many people will be asked to dig into their income support payments in order to meet the gap that will appear? That is a very worrying feature, upon which I invite the Minister to comment. I also invite him to say a word or two about the more pressing subject of special needs and housing association rents. The House recognises that they will be higher than average because of the security, staff on site and amenity services which are often included in rent structures. There is particular concern that, because the rents will be high, tenants will find that their rent is not covered by housing benefit.

Many hon. Members have received a good deal of correspondence from women's aid refuges about that matter. The provision of 24-hour cover on site must be paid for. If we do not have a special arrangement either to exempt or to take account of those factors, there may be very real difficulties.

We have not yet seen the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee. We know that the changes come into force in October and that time is short. In a letter to me of 23 May, the right hon. Gentleman said that no decisions had been taken, and that consultations were going on with local authorities and the Institute of Rent Officers. It would be useful if the right hon. Gentleman would say something today to reassure the many people who are worried about that issue, and perhaps also allow hon. Members to answer the many inquiries that they have received from their constituents in that regard. It is an important matter.

I recognise that it is a matter for the usual channels but, as an addendum, I express the hope that we will debate those issues before the House rises. Those very important changes will almost certainly come into effect before the House returns after the summer recess. It would be extremely bad if the debate on those issues were squeezed out and we were running to catch up after the event if the arrangements proved unsatisfactory.

Finally, on housing benefit—I crave your slight indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker, but it is not often that I wish to thank a Minister—I ask the right hon. Gentleman to pass on my thanks to the Secretary of State for Scotland, who has now decided to defer and reconsider market testing the rent officer system in Scotland. That arrangement was never contemplated in England, but it was to come into force in Scotland.

When I wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland about the matter a year ago last April, I was given short shrift and told, in the politest possible manner, to mind my own business and that the proposal would go ahead. However, it has now been postponed for at least a year, when it will be considered afresh. I do not think that that defeat for the deregulation programme should go unnoticed, and I thank the Secretary of State for it.

I now turn to protection payments for mortgage interest on income support. I do not want to rehearse the facts of which we are all aware: that support will be withdrawn for the first nine months for any new borrower who makes an application after the system comes into effect, and that existing borrowers will receive no assistance for two months and assistance at 50 per cent. of the normal rate for four months. I shall simply reiterate my belief and explain why I hold it.

The withdrawal of support is likely further to depress the market, reinforce uncertainty and burden the majority of home owners with an unwanted additional cost. The measures must be viewed in context. Rising interest rates have had a considerable impact in my constituency and, I suspect, in every part of the country. They may have been necessary in view of the financial situation, but they have had an impact. There is a heavy presence of negative equity, and we have seen the reduction in mortgage interest relief which Baroness Thatcher has so criticised in the past few days.

Further reduction in mortgage interest relief should not be on anyone's agenda at this stage. It is out of the question, in view of the current state of the housing market. There have been two cuts in relief—indeed, if one adopts Baroness Thatcher's perspective, we have had three cuts, because there was a reduction from 40 per cent. before the further reductions to 20 per cent. and then 15 per cent. Perhaps, in his reply, the Minister will give us a categorical assurance that further cuts are not on his agenda, given the way in which he has punished the housing market in the past year or two.

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): Is the hon. Gentleman aware that, on more than one occasion, his hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) has called for mortgage interest tax relief to be phased out

[Mr. Charles Hendry]

over five to 10 years? Will the hon. Gentleman make it clear to the House whether he supports his hon. Friend in that view, or whether he now disagrees with him?

Mr. Dewar: I have made the position very clear. If the hon. Gentleman had listened to me, he would know that that is not on our agenda, and we do not believe that it should be on the Government's agenda either—although there have been indications that it is very much on their agenda.

I made the serious point to the Minister earlier that it is a great mistake to canvass every possibility for the future and assume that they are policy commitments. If we applied that approach to the Conservative party, we would come up with the most outré and unlikely series of proposals which I would not have the brass neck to hang around anyone's neck in an election campaign. I do not regard myself as a man of much delicacy or sympathetic feeling, but I commend that attitude to the hon. Member for High Peak on this occasion. We must consider the practicalities and the cost when dealing with mortgage interest protection.

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): The hon. Gentleman suggests that the further reduction of mortgage interest tax relief should not be on anyone's agenda. However, it was clearly on the agenda of the Labour party's housing spokesman, the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford), when he conducted an interview with the Shelter magazine "Roof". The magazine made it absolutely clear that it believed that it was a serious proposal, and contrasted it with much of the hon. Gentleman's so-called "Yes, Minister" contributions. It was apparently still on the agenda of the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) this morning when he was interviewed on the "Today" programme. He certainly had not ruled it out.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): Speech.

Mr. Lilley: No, I am grateful for the opportunity to ask this question. The hon. Gentleman was asked—

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but interventions, by their nature, should be short. I call Mr. Dewar.

Mr. Dewar: I think that I have dealt with the matter fairly clearly, so I intend to move on. I have made it clear that reductions in MIRAS would be extraordinarily unwise in the present situation. Leaving aside that qualification, they are not on the Labour party's agenda. I cannot make that any clearer, and I am afraid that the right hon. Gentleman must be satisfied with my explanation.

Mr. Lilley: The transcript of this morning's interview states:

"Mr. James Naughtie: Is it clear precisely what your policy is on mortgage tax relief if there were to be a Labour Government?

Donald Dewar: No, we have not committed ourselves to cut it".

Mr. Dewar: The right hon. Gentleman sounds like someone who is trying to prove that Bacon wrote the sonnets of Shakespeare—it is a particularly unrewarding activity. I suggest that he should be happy with the clear and unambiguous statement that I have given him. That is the sensible thing to do.

I turn to income support and mortgage interest, because that brings us to one of the little entertainments of recent days: the Skipton story. I hope that the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) is not offended, but I did not know a great deal about Skipton. I know that Skipton castle was razed to the ground in 1645 by the parliamentary forces. That seems a rather attractive idea, but it is not one that I commend.

I remember that Lytton Strachey, when dealing with Lord Hartington—that Whig grandee of Gladstone's period and head of the great house of Cavendish—was wont to growl in an undertone:

"the proudest moment of my life was when my pig won first prize at Skipton fair".

However, I confess that I do not think that that takes us much further down the road.

I want to make another confession; I was taken by surprise by the Prime Minister's announcement. I telephoned the Skipton building society, and was told that it had not made an announcement. I was very puzzled—though, to be fair, all was explained when the Prime Minister kindly wrote to me saying that the plan had been confided to the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon, the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration, by the chief executive. The hon. Gentleman therefore, in a sense, had inside information. It was suggested that I should accuse the hon. Gentleman of trying to curry favour with the Government, but such an appalling pun would not pass my lips.

The Skipton building society has about 0.5 per cent. of the mortgage market and about 1 per cent. of the building society market. Of course, the question that arises is, what happens to the other 99 per cent? I take the view—and I would think that this theme would be especially popular with the Secretary of State—that there is no such thing as a free lunch. The Skipton is going to pay about £2 million per annum for what will be a fairly expensive loss leader and marketing tool. It is entitled to do that, but we should not regard it as a precedent for the industry as a whole.

The Skipton is offering narrow unemployment cover for free, but if one wants to add sickness or accident insurance, one has to pay. One gets a 30 per cent. discount, but one still has to pay. Anne Ashworth, the personal finance editor of *The Times*, said that the scheme will not last for ever and added:

"The description 'free' is not entirely accurate. . . as a building society is a mutual organisation, which belongs to its members the cost is being met by the customers."

I do not know whether anyone will follow the Skipton, or whether the chief executive is right about the doubts he expressed about that. In any event, it is wrong to assume that the Skipton is going to continue to finance that free lunch for ever.

What Mortgage magazine has a table of all the top building societies that measures the interest paid on an average mortgage at two, five and 10 years. At two years, the House will be glad to know, the Skipton was the 81st most expensive out of 83. At five years, it was doing somewhat better, at 71st out of 82. At 10 years, it was 61st out of 63. Perhaps that is why the Skipton can afford it.

The Skipton also has a problem of long-term arrears, which was also interesting because, of investors with arrears over 12 months, average debt was spectacularly higher than with any other building society in the table. It

has been suggested—I only repeat it—that that might explain some of the society's interest in that sort of insurance.

What is true is that the costs are set to increase as a result of the Government's initiative. As one of our papers in Scotland, *The Scotsman*, said, it is a double whammy. It reckons that, between April and October this year, the cost of an average mortgage in Scotland will go up by 11.8 per cent, and puts the income support mortgage insurance premium at almost £200 a year.

It may be that there are more friendly commentators. One of the few friends who seems to have given the time of day to the Secretary of State's argument is the Association of British Insurers. I take it as a witness. It said last week that the premium would be equivalent to 0.5 per cent. on current mortgage rates, which, on an average mortgage, is about £200 to £250. I am happy to take that as an expert and unbiased view.

The Government's scheme will add to the

"already intolerable burden of taxation"

that people have to face. That quotation is from the hon. Member for Monmouth (Mr. Evans), the Under-Secretary of State for Social Security. I am not clear why he should be sitting happily on the Front Bench when, after his Government have been in power for 15 years, he adduces that we face an "intolerable burden of taxation". Be that as it may, costs will go up and that will be unwelcome.

To evaluate the Skipton offer, or any of the other private insurance policies, we must look at the small print. The Skipton, for example, allows an excess of 60 days in respect of mortgage payments, which is standard and I make no complaint about it. People cannot be in arrears, which knocks out a lot of vulnerable people. One must be in work and not aware of impending unemployment. That would rule out about half of the Conservative Members. Those are common exceptions.

Voluntary redundancy rules people out, and carers are unlikely to get coverage on most policies; the self-employed may be able to establish entitlement only by filing for bankruptcy. Block cover is being offered by the Skipton, but it is block cover that has taken on a new meaning.

It is interesting to note that, originally, only 5 per cent. of people took out such coverage. I concede that that figure has gone up to 30 per cent. for recent mortgages, which is not surprising, given the publicity and fears. Even so, I am advised that 12 to 15 per cent. of those taking out such coverage fall out of the schemes within the first year.

It would be unfair to say that the Secretary of State has become an advertising billboard for one company or another, but, on 26 January, he sang the praises of General Accident Direct. It offered £4.50 per £100 for such insurance cover, but it was cherry-picking. That was the bottom rate of a system of differential rates depending on age, sex, post code and employment. If we follow that pattern, the danger is that those who most need cover will find it hardest to get and pay most for it.

General Accident Direct gave a good reply to our inquiries, in which it frankly set out the details.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, with the cut in income support for mortgage interest payment, many disabled people and people with long-term illnesses will suffer because many insurance companies will not cover them, and those that do will force them to pay increased premiums?

Mr. Dewar: I certainly agree that, on precedents, that is true. The Secretary of State no doubt will say that that will all change and some chemistry will set to work, but the evidence so far is all against him.

At the end of the day, General Accident Direct's offer is motivated by the phrase "If you don't score, it will cost you more." That, understandably, is the principle on which private insurance works.

Let us not forget the Department of the Environment. It commissioned research from the university of Loughborough, putting public money into necessary public research. The one startling fact that emerged—and one that I properly highlight—is that, of the claims that were made under private insurance policies, two thirds were unsuccessful. It is not just a matter of getting cover: once one has it, with all the exceptions and difficulties, very little may result from it.

To be fair to Secretary of State, he recognised that fact in his article in *The Times* on 10 January, in which he wrote:

"Some insurance policies prove unsatisfactory. Either they do not cover some risks or the companies take refuge in the small print."

I agree. He has got to go a long way to establish that those difficulties can be overcome. There is justified scepticism about believing that this is not a case of trying to persuade the private insurance sector to move into a sort of cover with which, for good reasons, it has not been traditionally involved. It is not a suitable case for treatment from their point of view.

I accept that I am open to the charge that I would say that, wouldn't I? I am on the Opposition Benches, and I do not like the scheme. However, there is almost unanimity on the matter, which is quite impressive.

Some may be prejudiced about the Secretary of State's views. He tells us that Council of Mortgage Lenders is a vested interest to be discounted. I should have thought that it had a lot of experience and expertise to offer. Its chief executive commented on the Loughborough report, and the results were quite extraordinary. We all heard the interview. I do not have a transcript of it, but I have some of the correspondence that followed.

We were told that Mr. Adrian Coles had made ill-judged remarks to discredit the Government's proposals,

"but, as so often when people resort to distortions he has simply succeeded in discrediting himself, and blackening the previously high reputation of the building society movement."

After that indictment, the reply of the chairman of the Council of Mortgage Lenders must have been a great disappointment to the Secretary of State. It said:

"The Chartered Institute of Housing is unable to support the planned changes in Income Support for Mortgage Interest . . . We believe that the changes will target marginal home owners and will inevitably feed through to increasing costs for local authorities. We also believe that a government committed to the expansion of home ownership should not be countenancing a package of measures which will severely dent confidence in what is already a stagnated housing market."

It went on to say that the proposals

"will dampen down the demand from new borrowers taking out mortgages for the first time."

[Mr. Dewar]

The TSB Group is a group of which not even the hon. Member for Dover (Mr. Shaw) could find a trace in donations to the Labour party, although I have no doubt that, if I suggested it, he might well make the allegation. I am summarising quite a complex letter, but Claire Weaver, the group's senior manager for Government affairs, said:

"The upshot of all this"—

her arguments—

"is that there is likely to be an increase in the level of repossessions, the housing market will become even further depressed, negative equity will increase, and the 'feel good' factor—so elusive for so long—will take even longer to come through."

Mike Blackburn, the chief executive of the Halifax building society, might be thought to be a witness of some credibility in this sphere. *The Times* of 22 March reports:

"Mike Blackburn . . . yesterday warned the Government that unless it was prepared to rethink its proposed cuts in mortgage income support, repossessions would rise and the most vulnerable would be left without a safety net."

It seems that there is an almost overwhelming, irrefutable weight of evidence that—to put it even in the most tentative way—the Government are running risks that they should not run, risks that are based on prejudice and not on a real assessment of the situation.

I repeat briefly the point that I made a long time ago, on 26 January. I do not understand why a Government who talk a great deal about home ownership should be withdrawing this safety net from the most vulnerable. There is nothing to stop people taking out additional cover, something of which the Secretary of State would no doubt approve—indeed, I, too, might approve of it—but why should we force people to take on additional burdens and withdraw help from those on income support who own their own homes, help which is not challenged for those who rent their homes?

There is discrimination against home ownership. At the end of the day, income support mortgage interest payments are the equivalent of rent. They do not reduce the capital; they are merely a rent paid to service the capital. If one withdraws that help on the grounds that it is wrong that the state should give it, the logic, presumably, is that one should do the same for people who live in rented accommodation.

The only distinction would be an odd one—that only wealthy people own their own homes. That is self-evidently untrue. No one would argue that we should withdraw housing benefit from those who are most hard pressed; why should we withdraw it from home owners? In particular, why should we put up with such a suggestion from this Government?

The Secretary of State will remember that, on 26 January, he said:

"The Labour party has only one objective locally and nationally: to become the nation's landlord. We are the party of home ownership, and we will remain so."—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1995; Vol. 253, c. 501.]

That makes two fine statements of old Tory prejudices, the one as inaccurate as the other, and becoming demonstrably more inaccurate as the record unfolds.

We have seen the Government's salami tactics in parallel spheres, so perhaps we could ask the Secretary of State whether he is going to draw a line under the nine-month period, or whether, if he gets the scheme limping into action, we shall be told it will be 12 or 18 months, or perhaps abolition? Can we draw a line under the nine-month period, or will the Secretary of State come back for more?

In all seriousness, Conservative Members are probably not yet under a great deal of pressure, because we are only moving towards the new system, but I believe that it will become an important issue. Certainly in my part of the world, a large number of people are struggling to maintain their position in the home market in the face of rising costs. The problem will grow, and we shall hear much more about it at a constituency level.

The Secretary of State should listen to the case that I am trying to make. It is strange for me to say so, but I think that he should listen to Lady Thatcher, because she is someone who recognises a betrayal when she sees one. I should have thought that she is someone whose instincts he would respect, as she was once, and spiritually still is, his political standard bearer. He should listen to the Skipton building society which, after all, was of some assistance to the Government, but let us remember what it is essentially saying. Let us remember what John Goodfellow said, the one stick to which the Secretary of State has been able to cling in stormy waters. He disagrees with Government policy; he is moving to

"limit the damage in a frail housing market"

and to try to protect his customers against what he thinks will happen to many other customers who are left to fend for themselves. The Secretary of State should listen to the construction industry, and to home owners in every part of the country who are in duress and see no prospect of relief.

The *Daily Mail*, another unlikely witness for the Labour party and one which is usually loyal to the last, was driven to ask in a pained headline on 3 May: "What do the Tories have against the hard pressed home buyer?" That question will echo with increasing resonance across the country. I am trying to save the Secretary of State from his own folly and error, not in the interests of his party, but in the interests of the country. I believe that he should think again.

5.15 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Security (Mr. Peter Lilley): I beg to move, To leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"reaffirms its commitment to enabling people to buy their own homes, which four out of five people aspire to do; welcomes the fact that the cost of home ownership relative to incomes is at an historically low level; recognises that the existing system of Income Support Mortgage Interest leaves seven out of ten households without cover for their housing costs when unable to work; welcomes the Government's proposed reforms which will help ensure that new home buyers protect their homes against the risk of unemployment; welcomes the innovation taking place in the lending and insurance markets to provide good quality and affordable cover; rejects proposals to spend even more taxpayers' money by introducing a mortgage benefit scheme that will effectively underwrite private borrowing; and is confident that proper management of this major household expense by comprehensive insurance schemes, backed by lenders and insurers, will contribute significantly to a return of market stability.".

I have some sympathy with Opposition Front Benchers on their misfortune in their choice of subject for Supply days. On the previous Supply day, they chose to have a debate on inequality, hoping that they could have a rerun of the issues raised by the Rowntree report. On the very

day planned for the debate, the Institute for Fiscal Studies released its evaluation of the statistics, which blew a hole in the Labour party's thesis that the poor were getting poorer. Today, the Labour party wanted to have a debate on income support for mortgage interest, but, between that decision being taken and today, the Skipton building society has blown a hole in its thesis.

Before I deal with the general topic, I shall answer the specific questions asked by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) about the two changes that we are introducing in housing benefit. First, he asked whether it would be necessary for people to draw on their income support or other forms of income in order to meet their contribution to rents if they are living in above-average properties. I should make it clear that the change applies to new claimants, and the system will therefore build gradually.

New claimants will usually have a choice about the sort of property that they occupy and only if they choose to occupy a property of above the reference level rent would they face that prospect at all. Then, of course, they would have the opportunity to negotiate the rent down. The evidence from those in analogous circumstances where the rent officer has limited the amount of rent eligible for housing benefit suggests that they are often successful.

The hon. Gentleman also asked about women's refuges and other hostels. I do not want to pre-empt my consideration of the Social Security Advisory Committee's report and advice on the matter, but I can say that I shall approach with distinct sympathy the case for exempting such hostels once I have considered its evidence. I hope that that fact will act as guidance so that people do not get too unnecessarily worked up about it.

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): Is the Secretary of State aware that in Southampton the current cost of housing benefit in cases where the city council exercises its discretion is more than £800,000 a year? The signs at the moment are that the sum to which it will be limited next year is £140,000. How can the Secretary of State expect such a cut in expenditure to be made without its greatly increasing the insecurity of those in greatest need?

Mr. Lilley: The new system will build slowly and relate only to the new cases coming on stream, not to existing cases. Therefore, over a period, we would expect a larger sum to be involved.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Lilley: I should like to make a little progress first. I have not yet got on to the main subject of the debate.

Mr. Betts: It is on that point.

Mr. Lilley: In that case, I shall give way.

Mr. Betts: The right hon. Gentleman has explained that the system will apply only to new claimants. I can follow his argument—although it is difficult to—as it applies to someone who moves into a property for the first time. A new claimant, however, may also be someone who already lives in a property and then becomes unemployed or suffers a fall in his income. Does he envisage someone in that position being able to negotiate a reduction in his rent, so that he can afford it in the new circumstances?

Mr. Lilley: That can already happen now. The current arrangements are that there is a period of exemption from restrictions. That will be carried over into the new system—a period during which people will be entitled to live in the property with full housing benefit. If a rent officer declares that the premises have a rent above the allowable amount for housing benefit, the same can happen now. As I say, the same sort of arrangements will apply under the new system.

The main subject of today's debate has been income support for mortgage interest, and the last half hour has made three things clear about the Labour party's position. First, Labour does not have an agreed policy to help the 70 per cent. of home owners for whom income support is not available if they lose their jobs. The second is that the Opposition still hanker, as always, after much higher public spending, but they dare not commit themselves publicly to it. The third is that, to hide their confusion, they resort to scaremongering and talking down the housing market. That is the best the Opposition have to offer the House today.

The hon. Member for Garscadden rested his case against the Government's plans in part on his criticisms of the mortgage protection policies sold by mortgage lenders. He claimed that those policies were unclear about what protection they did or did not offer; yet he himself refuses to make clear what protection Labour's policies will or will not offer to home owners, let alone how much they will cost. The hon. Gentleman criticises the small print of the insurance policies, but will not give us even the headlines of Labour party policies. He has given us no policies at all. So before complaining about the mote in the eye of the insurers he should perhaps remove the beam from his own.

This morning on the "Today" programme, the chairman of the House-Builders Federation made the point that in most respects the outlook for prospective home owners should be very attractive. I agree with him. Incomes are rising and are set to rise further. Unemployment is falling steadily. The price of housing is low, relative to incomes—the lowest for about 10 years. Interest rates are at the lower end of their historic range. The overall cost of buying a home, after the tax changes that we have announced, is still £130 a month less than it was five years ago.

The only thing holding the housing market back is the sense of job insecurity among potential first-time buyers in today's competitive world. Increasingly, people realise that the state safety net for mortgage interest lets 70 per cent. of those who lose their jobs fall through it, so they hesitate to start on the road to home ownership. Listening to the Opposition, one would think that the present system of income support for mortgage interest was satisfactory, was available to everyone out of work, and prevented repossessions. That is nonsense.

The current system is highly unsatisfactory. It leaves 70 per cent. of people with mortgages without any help if they lose their jobs. People with working spouses, redundancy money, savings, part-time work or early retirement income do not qualify. As a result, about 150,000 people on unemployment benefit get not a penny of income support for their mortgages, and 50,000 people a year have their homes repossessed. Yet the cost of income support for mortgage interest has risen from £30

[Mr. Lilley]

million to over £1 billion in 15 years, and its very availability has discouraged the growth of comprehensive private mortgage insurance.

Mr. David Nicholson (Taunton): What my right hon. Friend is saying about the apparent ineffectiveness of the present system is extremely telling. The self-employed are a very important group in many of our constituencies—a group who have suffered greatly during the recession of the past four or five years. Is it not true that they would not usually qualify for this protection, especially if they have a spouse in work or some capital? Is it not therefore necessary to look again at the system and to try, as I hope the new system will, to help people in an even-handed way?

Mr. Lilley: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The Opposition have made much of the difficulties that self-employed people may have when claiming under some private insurance policies, but they make nothing of the difficulties that they may face when claiming under the state system. The same problems of determining whether someone's business is just going through a difficult period or has had to cease altogether, so the person is genuinely out of work, apply in the state system as in the private system.

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way on the point about insurance?

Mr. Lilley: I shall be talking about insurance for quite a long while. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will listen to what I have to say before commenting.

There are only three possible options in response to the situation that I have outlined. The first is to do nothing; to leave the 70 per cent. of home owners unprotected; to let repossessions continue; and to leave the housing market depressed by the resulting insecurity, particularly for first-time buyers. That option means letting the taxpayer continue to pick up the tab, not just for past bad lending but for any unwise future lending. That is the Dewar option.

The second option is to expand the state system into a mortgage benefit scheme for anyone with no or low income. That does address the issue. Almost all the lobby groups which the hon. Gentleman so approvingly quoted advocate this option—but it would have a huge cost. Even the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux accepts that it would cost upwards of £600 million. Coupled with reversing our proposals, the cost could easily be nearer £1 billion a year or more.

The Borrie Commission on Social Justice, advocated this sort of mortgage interest benefit and was prepared to finance it by ending mortgage interest tax relief. The Labour Front-Bench housing spokesman adopted this policy in his interview with the Shelter magazine *Roof*. He said:

"I do think a mortgage benefit scheme has substantial advantages . . . if part of its costs were met by the further phasing out of MIRAS, so be it."

When I challenged the hon. Gentleman last time, he accepted that that was his policy and berated me for having

"the gall to criticise the Labour party for having no positive proposals".—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1995; Vol. 253, c. 508.]

He claimed that Labour in fact had one.

Today, we understand that the policy is temporarily in limbo. A close study of *Hansard* will reveal that the hon. Member for Garscadden merely said that it would be wrong at present to cut and eliminate mortgage interest tax relief, but that the Labour party would be prepared to do that if it ever got back to power. Will the hon. Gentleman rule that out now?

Mr. Dewar: I made it clear that it was not on the agenda—a perfectly straightforward statement. As the Government have cut mortgage interest relief twice—arguably three times—in the past couple of years, may I ask the right hon. Gentleman whether he wants that reversed, as some of the papers are suggesting, or whether he rules out the possibility?

Mr. Lilley: I shall deal with both points. We are going to be in the business of reducing taxes as the economy grows and as we curb the growth of public expenditure. I have forgotten the hon. Gentleman's other point—

Mr. Dewar: As the right hon. Gentleman seems so keen, I would not want to deprive him of the chance to answer both questions. My question was whether he would categorically rule out further reductions, given the Government's record. Secondly, I wanted to know whether the right hon. Gentleman would comment on the report in *The Daily Telegraph* today, which states that, in order to head off a leadership challenge in October—not a very honourable determining factor—the Government are going to effect a U-turn.

Mr. Lilley: I am glad to note that the hon. Gentleman cannot remember what his second point was either—

Mr. Dewar: That was my second point. Read *Hansard*.

Mr. Lilley: I shall read it, and I shall certainly apologise if I have got it wrong. The question sounded different the first time around. The hon. Gentleman will have to ask *The Daily Telegraph* about its sources; and matters of taxation are for the Chancellor. We know that my right hon. and learned Friend and this party are in the business of getting taxes down in the future. The Opposition are not in the business of ruling out tax cuts for the future.

The hon. Gentleman has said that the abolition of this tax relief is not on his agenda: he has not got an agenda to put it on.

Mr. Hendry: When my right hon. Friend referred to the article in *Roof*, the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) shook his head. Yet the minutes of one of the meetings of the all-party group on homelessness have the hon. Gentleman saying:

"The phasing out of the"

mortgage tax relief

"subsidy would be a much safer policy, especially when combined with the introduction of the Mortgage Benefit Scheme".

Does not that make it clear where he stands?

Mr. Lilley: Absolutely. I think that the hon. Member for Greenwich, the housing spokesman for the Labour party, is much more forthcoming about his policies than the rest of the fringe would like him to be.

Shelter certainly got a different impression in the course of its interview. It said that, under scrutiny, the hon. Member for Greenwich, relied heavily on "Yes,

Minister" responses, such as, "I cannot quantify that," "I am not saying that I am committed to that figure," and the ubiquitous, "We will certainly want to look at that."

But when it came to mortgage benefit, a genuine policy initiative that is clearly music to the ears of the budget-battered lenders, Shelter was given the impression that it was a clear commitment, even though most of what the hon. Gentleman said manifestly was not.

The third option is to encourage the spread of private insurance, and ensure that everyone taking out a new mortgage has proper protection, by insurance or otherwise, against the threat of a spell of unemployment. For periods longer than nine months, of course, income support for mortgage interest will be available on the same conditions as at present. That is the Government option. We are determined to encourage cheaper, better, more comprehensive insurance. The Opposition may not like it, but it is clear that we are going to succeed.

Let me take cost, quality and coverage in turn. When I first debated this issue in the House, I predicted that the cost of insurance would fall. In the past, mortgage insurance was expensive. Only a few people took it out. A disproportionate number of them were poor risks—people who had some reason to suspect that they might lose their jobs. Consequently, insurers faced high costs and charged high premiums. And the lenders added high commissions on top—often about 30 per cent. of the premium. Following my announcement, the first thing to happen was the entry of direct insurance schemes cutting out that commission. That is why General Accident Direct was able to cut the typical premium from £7 per £100 to £4.50. That is not a huge sum compared with the cost of insuring household contents or the buildings fabric.

Then the House-Builders Federation showed the effect of pooling risks. It told me that builders will offer cover, to anyone buying an average-priced new house, for the first three years for just £150. That is £1 a week. I understand that, already, a third of people buying new houses have that cover.

Then the building societies began to respond to our new proposals. The Leader of the Opposition was rather flummoxed, not to say disappointed, when last week my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister revealed that the Skipton building society plans to offer insurance for all its policy holders free of charge.

Ms Lynne: Can the Secretary of State tell the House whether the Skipton building society will give free cover to disabled people, to those with a long-term medical condition or to those who have consulted a doctor on a medical condition within the past three years?

Mr. Lilley: The cover is for unemployment. We are considering the treatment of those with pre-existing medical conditions and those with long-term conditions, and I shall respond on that point when I have considered the recommendations from the Social Security Advisory Committee on that. We want, essentially, to mesh in our system with what can be made available realistically by the private sector.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I was most interested last week when the matter of the Skipton building society was raised. I am not sure that the Skipton building society was not as surprised as I was. I ask a specific question of my right hon. Friend. If a building society is to offer insurance for free, where will the money come from to do that? Does it not mean that savers will get less? Is there not a risk that fewer people will put money into building societies?

Mr. Lilley: I shall come to that point, but the brief answer is that it will come out of its margins.

I rather suspect that the hon. Member for Garscadden got a ticking off from the Leader of the Opposition for allowing him to blunder into good news by mistake, and the hon. Gentleman was immediately dispatched to discredit Skipton's plans. First he wrote, as he admitted today, to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, casting doubts on the existence of those plans. The hon. Gentleman wrote:

"I was very concerned by your reference to the Skipton Building Society in Prime Ministers' Questions today, in which you said that the Society is introducing an insurance scheme which will provide 'cover for all of its borrowers without increasing premiums'. The implication was that those of us who follow these matters had missed an announcement about the Society's plans."

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister wrote back and said:

"I fear you did miss news of the Skipton Building Society's plans. You might like to refer to the article in the Daily Telegraph on Saturday 20 May about their scheme."

Mr. Dewar: This is all good fun and really rather unimportant, but as the Secretary of State has made the charges, I must say to him, yes, I did miss the newspaper article, which was on page B9 of the "Money-go-round" section. It was the middle paragraph of a diary. When I telephoned and spoke to Mr. Alan Scotter, the director of sales and marketing for the building society, that afternoon, he told me that he had made no announcement whatever, that he could not confirm or deny the truth of what the Prime Minister had said, and he gave me, very clearly, the impression that it had been very surprised indeed that this had been said. We now know how the Prime Minister knew. It was not from any public announcement but from the fact that the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry), who is sitting beside the Secretary of State, had had a conversation—I presume it was social—with the chief executive, who had confided in him. He had not made any announcement to the general public.

Mr. Lilley: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the way in which I got to know about this originally was through reading *The Daily Telegraph*. My hon. Friend, who happens to be strategically placed, also has his sources of information. But as the hon. Gentleman said, it was a singularly unimportant point on which to detain the House at such length.

Having failed to disprove the existence of the policy, the hon. Gentleman went on to suggest that Skipton could offer free insurance only by putting up its interest rates. The society has denied that and is quoted in *The Sunday Times* as saying:

"Any society could afford to provide free policies—just look at their profits."

Indeed, building society margins at present are at an all-time record.

This morning, the hon. Gentleman was reduced to arguing that Skipton was just a tiny maverick which no one else would follow. "It has only 1 per cent. of the market," he said. Alas, there is now detailed evidence that his pessimism—perhaps it is optimism from the Opposition's

[Mr. Lilley]

point of view—is unfounded. The *Mortgage Finance Gazette*, together with Special Risk Services, has carried out a comprehensive survey of lenders. It says that

"virtually all large building societies"

completed its questionnaire—so the survey covers 75 per cent. of the new lending in this country. It reported:

"Two-thirds of the sample planned to buy block protection for their borrowers. Of that two-thirds, over 60 per cent. plan to give it away free."

It concluded:

"The results of this survey should provide . . . comfort to the government . . . it is likely that block protection for borrowers will become the norm."

Mr. Dewar *rose—*

Mr. Lilley: The hon. Gentleman is free to intervene if he wants to discredit that, too.

Mr. Dewar: I am not in the business of discrediting in that sense. I have fairly reflected what has been said by the industry itself in my contribution. I have had the good sense to consult the industry again over the past 24 hours, and we have had rather a different picture. The best thing that I can say to the Secretary of State is that we shall all have to wait and see what emerges. I have taken good advice and see no reason to retract what I have suggested.

Mr. Lilley: I think that I have given the hon. Gentleman a very good reason to retract—an objective, anonymous survey, covering 75 per cent. of lenders—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Bootle (Mr. Benton) intervenes from a sedentary position, as is his wont, because he is very reluctant ever to expose himself to criticism.

The second issue was the quality of insurance policies. Opposition attacks have rested heavily on criticisms of existing mortgage protection policies, voiced by Loughborough university, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Council of Mortgage Lenders. The Loughborough study was not primarily designed to examine mortgage protection policies, and its observations on that subject, particularly on the success of claims, were based on interviews with just 12 people. NACAB has wider experience of the difficulties that have arisen with policies, precisely because people with difficulties go to their local citizens advice bureau. I am happy to say, however, that NACAB now serves on the monitoring committee for the code of practice governing the sale of creditor insurance. The Government recently approved a strengthened version of that code requiring lenders to spell out limitations of policies and ensure that they are appropriate to borrowers' needs. The National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux recently said that the new industry guidelines being drafted to cover the types of policy for sale did address their main concern.

Finally, there is the Council of Mortgage Lenders. Banks and building societies are the principal beneficiaries of the present income support for mortgage interest scheme; indeed, we pay roughly £1 billion of taxpayers' money a year directly into their coffers. It is natural that they should want to retain the system in full and, if possible, expand it into a mortgage benefit scheme. The director general of the Council of Mortgage Lenders recently said:

"we would especially like to work with Labour on working up a mortgage benefit scheme."

The council seems to believe that that is the Labour party's policy. The remark was made in the same issue of Shelter's magazine.

The director general seems to take Labour's housing spokesman rather more seriously than does the hon. Member for Garscadden. Unfortunately, the director general's understandable enthusiasm for state-subsidised mortgage insurance tempted him to rubbish private mortgage protection policies as

"not really worth a great deal".

He seemed to forget for a moment that most of those policies are sold for a hefty commission by his own members.

Unlike Mr. Adrian Coles, I do not believe that banks and building societies have been cynically selling worthless policies to their borrowers. After all, it is in the lender's interest to ensure that insurance policies pay out when the borrower loses his job. The *Mortgage Finance Gazette* survey that I mentioned earlier found that the overwhelming majority of lenders were happy with the way in which claims were dealt with by the insurers. In fact, one of the largest insurers revealed that it paid out on 80 per cent. of claims, and that the level of complaints that it received was almost negligible.

When lenders negotiate block insurance for their borrowers, they will have an even stronger incentive and leverage to ensure that the policies are of high quality, do not contain hidden escape clauses and pay out readily on genuine claims: otherwise the lender's loans will not be serviced when the borrower is in difficulties.

It is, of course, probable that private insurance rather than income support will discourage some kinds of irresponsible lending. In particular, it will discourage lending for equity withdrawal—second, third and even fourth mortgages. One fact to emerge from the Loughborough university study is that 50 per cent. of borrowers in arrears had extended or increased their mortgages, or taken on extra mortgages. The new arrangements for income support will discourage a resurgence of such lending in future.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): Earlier, the Secretary of State kept talking about mortgage providers providing free insurance. An impeccably right-wing Conservative such as the right hon. Gentleman must know that it cannot really be free; someone must be paying for it, directly or indirectly. This so-called free mortgage insurance reminds me of the promises of Ministers when we debated eye testing some years ago that of course opticians would conduct the tests for free because of the pressures of the market. That free eye testing never transpired, and this free mortgage insurance will not transpire either.

Mr. Lilley: Surely it is clear that the process of competition drives down costs and forces people to take the cost of providing cover out of their otherwise higher-than-normal margins. It is to their competitive advantage to do so.

The third area of concern during our last debate, and since, was the coverage of insurance for different categories of people. In January, the hon. Member for Garscadden said that because of our policy

"there will be great difficulties for the self-employed".

In fact—as I mentioned to my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson)—an increasing number of insurance companies, including those providing direct mortgage and block insurance, cover self-employment.

The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) said that many contract workers

"will find that they are uninsurable".—[*Official Report*, 26 January 1995; Vol. 523, c. 496-529.]

Again, policies of the type negotiated by the Skipton building society do cover contract workers.

The Association of British Insurers has reiterated that

"virtually anyone who is able to obtain a mortgage should be able to purchase insurance to go with it—even special categories of mortgage holders such as the self-employed, single parent and part-time workers."

In short, I am confident that we are well set to see the rapid expansion of low-cost, high-quality comprehensive insurance.

Members of the Labour party—like their unfortunate, flummoxed leader—are left equally bewildered. Their problem is that they still do not understand the creative, innovative, cost-cutting power of free enterprise when it is released from the distortions of state subsidy and intervention. There could be no clearer evidence that the party is still the old Labour party: hostile to private enterprise, ignorant of how it works and instinctively preferring to rely on subsidised state provision.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): I was encouraged by my right hon. Friend's response to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne). Does he intend under the legislation to outlaw discrimination against disabled people, to make it illegal for mortgage lenders to refuse to provide mortgage insurance for disabled people under block schemes? Would they, at the very least, be required to look at each individual case and not discriminate against categories of people? Will my right hon. Friend undertake, on behalf of the Government, to monitor the position? In the event that the private system fails to provide adequate mortgage cover for disabled people, will he ensure that his Department affords other protection?

Mr. Lilley: I can certainly give my hon. Friend an assurance that, when considering the advice of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the representations made to it, we shall look closely at the interaction of the proposals and our measures to improve the position of disabled people, to ensure that we do not take away with one hand what we give with the other. I do not wish to spell out the details, but that will be the underlying approach, which I think will be shared by my hon. Friend and, indeed, the whole House.

Less than a month ago, having given his interview to Shelter, the hon. Member for Greenwich—Labour's housing spokesman—went to a conference organised by Shelter. There he promised that a Labour Government would repeal our reforms to income support for mortgage interest. In due course, that would cost hundreds of millions of pounds and leave 70 per cent. of mortgage payers unprotected. Will the hon. Member for Garscadden reaffirm his colleague's pledge? Is Labour's policy to withdraw the changes that we have made in income support if it ever becomes the Government?

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Greenwich): Will the Secretary of State accept that I did not do what he claims I did? At that conference—the hon. Member for Skipton and Ripon (Mr. Curry) was present—I gave a clear undertaking that we would fight the introduction of the proposals tooth and nail. We believe that they will be very damaging to the market, and will cause hardship to individuals. We said that we would do everything to stop them coming into effect.

Mr. Lilley: According to the report that I received—not from my hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon or any other political source, but from a non-political source—the hon. Member for Greenwich clearly did what I said that he had done, but if he says that he did not I entirely accept his word. I believe that in the House we should accept an hon. Member's word. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Ripon was not the source.

The upshot is that we do not know whether the Opposition would repeal the measures. The Opposition have made no policy statement about whether they would repeal them. That is another item that is not on their non-agenda.

The hon. Member for Garscadden had the cheek to raise the question of taxation. As I said then, our policy is to reduce taxes when it is prudent to do so, but the only way to afford tax reductions is to curb public spending growth. That must inevitably involve curbing the growth of social security spending because it accounts for more than 40 per cent. of what central Government spend.

In the past two years, I have set out, introduced legislation on and begun to implement a programme of reform to ensure that the social security budget does not outstrip the nation's ability to pay, yet the Labour party has opposed nearly every reform—not just this measure, but the measures on pensions, unemployment benefits and incapacity benefit. In effect, it has rejected the bulk of the £4 billion of savings a year by the end of the century which I have put in train. Even if it is not persuaded by the housing spokesman to commit itself to £600 million of extra spending on a new mortgage benefit, Labour must tell the country how it would finance up to £4 billion of savings that it wishes to forgo.

The Opposition paint an unremittingly gloomy picture of the housing outlook. They then fail to agree on any remedies or policies. The hon. Member for Garscadden offers nothing to help people who have no mortgage protection. Labour's record confirms that it is the enemy of a free housing market. It destroyed private renting, it opposed council house sales and it wants to abolish mortgage interest tax relief entirely.

The hon. Gentleman offers nothing to help first-time buyers and he does his best to undermine their confidence by blatant scaremongering. As I have demonstrated, however, the outlook for housing is a lot brighter than he suggests and our reforms of income support for mortgage interest will help make prospects brighter still. Our policies should lead to the development of high-quality insurance, giving wide coverage at modest cost. That will ensure that most prospective first-time buyers will be offered low-cost mortgage insurance against jobs lost. That will boost their confidence and so strengthen the housing market.

5.51 pm

Mr. Barry Jones (Alyn and Deeside): The debate has been begun by two of our most coherent debaters. I like the style of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow,

[Mr. Barry Jones]

Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), which is frank and at times quite tart. He is an honest debater. The Secretary of State for Social Security can be a persuasive debater, if at times over-sanguine. In today's debate, he ducked and weaved with some mischief and managed to sit down without acknowledging too many of the great errors that his Government have committed. What should be emphasised throughout the debate is that, for 16 years, Her Majesty's Government have had control over and given the lead in housing. It is not good enough for Ministers to refer over and again to what they perceive to be defects in the policies of Her Majesty's Opposition when it is the Government who carry responsibility and must face up to some worrying situations.

The context of our debate, as it affects people, is wretched. One miserable statistic is that, in the past five years, 295,000 of our fellow citizens have suffered repossession. Another worrying statistic is that more than 1.2 million of them suffer negative equity. I define the first as a misery, and the second as a continuing and deep worry for those who are affected.

I make a plea to the Government: do not end the income support safety net for home buyers who have suffered a loss of employment. That is a real plea and I hope that it does not fall on deaf ears in the months ahead. The second plea is more positive. I hope that the Government will sanction greater release of council house receipts so that, over a period, we can get some of that money into the housing market.

I should like to raise matters that concern north Wales. In 1992, Alyn and Deeside council was able to complete only 22 houses. In the same year, only 42 houses could be completed by Clwyd county council. The local authorities in Clwyd—Delyn, Glyndwr, Wrexham and Colwyn—were not able to complete one home in 1992. In that year, throughout Wales, there were only 133 completions by local authorities—a wretched figure. The great city of Cardiff was able to complete only six houses. That offers a pretty miserable scene when one considers the fact that Cardiff city council represents the capital of Wales and that city has a pressing housing problem.

Mr. Hendry: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jones: I will not give way at this point. I want to make a brief speech and many hon. Members will seek to catch Madam Deputy Speaker's eye.

There are two fundamental requirements for fellow citizens: they should have a home and, secondly, they should have a job. I take the view that some form of housing is the priority, even before a job. One cannot have a civilised existence without a home. Anyone without it is in serious trouble. To say that a house should come before a job is a bold statement to make in any debate, but that is the view that I have formed after only 25 years in the House and after holding at least 50 surgeries or advice bureaux every year.

My proposal to the Secretary of State is that he should lead the Government in a greater and more urgent attack on the tens of thousands of aging houses for which councils have taken responsibility. There should be a much bigger programme of council house building. More tenancies should be made available for people who live on their own.

Senior citizens will always tell us that the sheltered housing in which they live is excellent. My own council makes a wonderful effort in that direction, but I find that there are not enough sheltered housing schemes for senior citizens. That means that throughout the country we cannot evacuate single elderly people from three-bedroom council houses. If we could do that, we would be able to give younger people with a family and children a better start in life.

If we wanted to contribute, as a House of Commons and as a Government, to the sum of human happiness, building more homes would be a great priority. If we could do that, we could employ jobless construction workers in Wales, who number tens of thousands. If we could put the unemployed construction worker back to work to make those houses, we could give a better start in life to younger people who have no home of their own.

I am sure that I am not the only Member of Parliament who finds that most of his time in his surgeries is taken up by people with housing problems. The particular problem that I should like to highlight involves young couples who come to see a Member of Parliament, who are living apart but who are married or have a stable partnership, who have young children and who find that they must make appointments to see each other because they have no settled home of their own. I find it difficult to interview couples such as those. That problem should add urgency to the Government's approach to their housing policy.

It is also clear to me that we have many houses that were built soon after the end of world war two; we have dilapidation. I cannot be the only Member of Parliament who receives petitions from worried local authority tenants in certain estates and streets, who say that it is time that their homes were modernised. All that those citizens are asking for is new windows and doors and central heating.

If we were able to meet that urgent necessity for tens of thousands of our fellow citizens, we could do better for them and enable them to have better lives and to realise their full potential. The Government have neglected the opportunity to take the lead and to give the industry a boost. Since 1979, the Government have had access to about £125 billion of North sea oil revenues. Too little of it has gone into the housing industry.

Although the Government can point to advances and improvements and to a housing programme, it is not a programme that will tackle our deep-seated problems. If the Government want to be seen to be in favour of the enhancement of the lives of those who are suffering from very real difficulties, they should give top priority to housing.

I must inform the Secretary of State that we have a serious housing problem in Wales and his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales would be able to tackle it to more effect, I presume, if he had more assistance from the Treasury. The Secretary of State for Social Security should tell his right hon. Friend that, if the Government are serious about tackling unemployment as well as housing, they must release more receipts from the sale of council houses. That is a top priority in Wales, as it is throughout the country, and I very much hope that the Secretary of State will bear in mind the matters that I have raised.

6.2 pm

Sir Norman Fowler (Sutton Coldfield): I agree with what the hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) said about the importance of housing, although not with all his remarks.

First, I must declare an interest, as I am the chairman of the National House Building Council. We do not build houses but give structural warranties on new houses and so are, in effect, a consumer protection body.

Furthermore—and nearer to the subject of this debate—I was Secretary of State for Social Services in another Government between 1981 and 1987 and, with that experience, I find it extremely difficult to take entirely seriously the Opposition's claim to be the natural protector of the home owner, even less the champion of the new, would-be home buyer. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, we all remember well Labour's opposition to council house sales. If Labour policy had prevailed, local authorities would still be the landlords for hundreds of thousands of tenants and 1.5 million council tenants would have been deprived of the opportunity of ownership.

Labour's policy announcement of 10 years ago is perhaps less well remembered, but has some similarities to my right hon. Friend's arguments. In 1985, I was about to publish the Government's proposals on social security reform, but was pre-empted by the Opposition, who had a radical new plan for housing. That plan amounted to the abolition of mortgage tax relief and the creation of a new housing allowance. Between 2 million and 3 million people would have lost out directly as a result.

The tradition that the Opposition spokesman for housing outlined—he is spokesman for housing now, but having listened to this debate I would not bet on his remaining spokesman long—

Mr. Dewar: Me?

Sir Norman Fowler: No, the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford). He is following in the tradition of what the Opposition have been saying for the past 10 years. I still require a great deal of persuasion that their line has changed.

Mr. Raynsford: Perhaps the right hon. Gentleman will check the records and accept that what he is alleging is incorrect. That set of policy proposals came from the Association of Metropolitan Authorities and was never endorsed as Labour party policy. In fact, the proposals were rejected by the Labour party. The right hon. Gentleman's attempt to present them as Labour party policy is incorrect and misleading and I hope that he will withdraw that assertion.

Sir Norman Fowler: I am interested in that statement. If the hon. Gentleman is referring to the 1985 proposals, as I was, I will not withdraw it. The hon. Gentleman had better check his facts, as I have done. I looked it up in *Hansard*. We debated those proposals on the Floor of the House at the time. They were not the AMA's proposals but those of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), if the hon. Gentleman wants to know. I have the *Hansard* here and I can show it to him if he wants to check.

The shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), said that the reduction in mortgage tax relief is

"not on the Labour party's agenda"

in present circumstances, and he also mentioned the small print of the insurance companies. I would want to examine the small print of his assurance very carefully.

At the very least, the Labour party's credentials on mortgage tax relief are suspect. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, it is clear that there are those in the Labour party, including some Labour Front-Bench figures, who would do away with mortgage tax relief altogether. That is another reason why I am not inclined to take lectures on housing from the Labour party.

As for the Opposition's attack on social security changes, the principle of those changes is difficult to dispute. I understand the concern that the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman quite fairly expressed and the quotations from the housing industry. Anyone with any experience in that area would know that there is concern.

The principles of the changes that the Government propose are difficult to dispute, however. Social security remains a vast budget. It is accepted now much more so than in the mid-1980s that we should target help to the people who need it. That principle is accepted now, but it was not then; it is certainly accepted by the Labour party's social commission. In addition, we must also be selective about what the social security system can do. In other words, if provision can be made in the private sector, through normal insurance, it is sensible for the Government to follow that avenue, which is precisely what they are doing in this case.

I understand the complaint about timing, but provided that provision can be made, and the evidence of the insurers is that it can—I hate to mention Skipton building society again—there is nothing to detain us in that regard. Indeed, judging by everything that has come from the Labour Front Bench today, if there ever were a Labour Government, as far as I understand the Opposition's policy—I am willing to give way again—such a measure would not be repealed.

My concern about the housing market does not relate to social security, but to mortgage tax relief—a subject that is not mentioned in the Opposition motion. My concern is about the Conservative manifesto pledge to

"bring home ownership within the reach of more families",

which is of fundamental importance. I am conscious that my old boss, my noble Friend Baroness Thatcher, has been setting out her views on that very subject and on several others at the same time. On the radio this morning I heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security nobly coming up with the charitable interpretation that Lady Thatcher had been laying about the Labour party. We must all hope that, if that indeed was her purpose, it never enters her mind to lay about the Government.

I see that Lady Thatcher's comments in her interview with David Frost about those hon. Members who had the Whip withdrawn are in *The Times* under the headline "Thatcher says Major treated rebels like a bossy headmaster". She is quoted as saying:

"Really, I don't like it when [the Government] act like an overpowering headmaster. It's no good. It won't do . . . each of these [rebels] has been elected by their constituents".

I look back with fondness on those much gentler times when my right hon. and noble Friend Lady Thatcher was in power. The Cabinet was rather like a gathering of old pals—all at one in policy. There were no disagreements and no leaks. As Secretary of State, one had only to ask for something and one would be given it. "Of course,

[Sir Norman Fowler]

Norman," Lady Thatcher would always say, "if you want more money for the health service, you must have it." No pressure was ever brought on the parliamentary party in any respect whatever. The rumour that the Single European Act was pushed through on a guillotine is, of course, a total misreading of history. Those who differed from Lady Thatcher on policy were allowed—no, they were not allowed, they were encouraged—to set out their reservations. It was, of course, the role of the Chief Whip to facilitate such constructive discussion.

The House may take it from what I have said that I am not an uncritical adherent of all of Lady Thatcher's historical account, interesting as it is, but on housing, she has got it absolutely right. It is a great pity that the then Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont), started the process of reducing mortgage tax relief in the 1991 and 1993 Budgets and that that process was continued in November 1993.

We all know that the Treasury wanted to reduce and, preferably, end mortgage tax relief. That is no secret. It would like to reduce and end other things too. But mortgage tax relief has led to much of the increase in home ownership over past years. More than 4 million more householders own their homes today than in 1979. That is a record of which this Government should be very proud and which should be extended. I repeat that that is what our manifesto promised.

Yet today—we have to take note of the position because we cannot run away from it—sales of second-hand houses are down, starts of new houses are down, and a respected body such as the House-Builders Federation predicts that prices could fall as the year progresses. We should not deplore the past; we should ask what—practically—can be done. I do not believe that we should have a negative equity relief scheme such as I have heard advocated. I do not think that the Government can take on the obligation to guarantee a particular price for individual houses. The Government can, however, encourage the market generally, especially first-time buyers.

There are two reasons why help for the first-time buyer would be going with the grain. First, there is no question that to be a home owner remains the public's aspiration. All surveys show that. That is not a reason to neglect other areas of housing policy such as housing associations and the rented sector. The main hope of recovery comes from giving help to those who want to buy. Secondly, given inflation, the price of houses and interest rates, it is an exceptionally good time to buy a house, but some confidence and encouragement are needed. The Government can give that encouragement.

There should be a mortgage tax scheme—I am not trying to turn the clock back to where we were at the beginning of the 1990s—aimed specifically at helping first-time buyers. That scheme would have a number of elements. There would be an increase in the rate of mortgage relief to, say, 25 per cent. There would be an increase in the MIRAS threshold to, say, £40,000 or £50,000. That special relief would taper over a 10-year period to a point where normal tax relief would take its place. Clearly, I accept that there are other ways of achieving the goal, but targeting first-time, new home buyers would not only help thousands of couples to realise their ambition to be home owners—I repeat that that ambition still exists—but have a knock-on effect in the housing market and get sales moving again. There would be a dual effect.

The Labour motion fails partly because it makes no mention of any kind of scheme for first-time buyers. Indeed, I do not think that Labour Members can really say that, in Government, they would preserve tax relief. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State showed that quite clearly. They are not prepared to say that that would be their position were they in Government. The motion also fails on the ground of Labour party history. I do not think that any objective analysis of the Labour party's position over the past 10 or 15 years shows that its heart is in extending home ownership. Indeed, it has fought against many of the most important developments.

Nevertheless, having said that about the Labour motion, I hope that Ministers will take from this debate a message that action in housing is needed urgently.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend. I very warmly support his proposition that we need to give an incentive to first-time buyers, not least because I made precisely that proposal in the House three weeks ago in an Adjournment debate on a Wednesday morning which I initiated. My right hon. Friend carries considerable weight with the Government because of his experience in many high offices of state. Will he assure me that, with me, he will weigh very heavily on the Government to bring about the proposal whereby MIRAS is increased to a standard rate of 25 per cent. up to a threshold of £50,000 for first-time buyers? If he agrees to do that, the campaign will be very successful. May I have his support?

Sir Norman Fowler: With respect to my hon. Friend, I thought that that is exactly what I was doing. I have been weighing in over the weekend. I have even appeared on the "Today" programme to put forward my proposition. No man can make a greater sacrifice and get up that early. In all seriousness, I agree very much with my hon. Friend. I say in the most friendly way conceivable that I would not wish Ministers to go away from this debate rejecting the Labour motion—which I reject—with its policies and its history, and with the feeling that nothing is required to be done.

Mr. Betts: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Norman Fowler: I shall not give way again as I am nearing the end of my speech. We should aim to extend home ownership. That was what we said in our 1992 manifesto. We should help the first-time buyer. We set out our aims in our manifesto and we should be guided by them.

6.18 pm

Mrs. Diana Maddock (Christchurch): It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of housing, not only to the national economy but to individuals and families. A house is the single biggest item which the majority of families will buy in their lives. People in the United Kingdom spend between them more than £30 billion a year on housing. Some 30 per cent. of our total net wealth is in housing.

Although this debate is specifically on the housing market, we must be careful not to lose sight of the most important principle of housing policy: to ensure that

everyone has some sort of roof over his or her head, regardless of who owns it, and that the accommodation is warm, healthy and not overcrowded. Hundreds of thousands of families in Britain today long for a home that fits those criteria. Security and stability are important, too. People want not just a good quality home; they want to know with a degree of certainty that they will still have it next week and next year. With the shortage of council house developments and the decline of the private rented sector in recent years, people have looked to owner-occupation as a way to get a secure home, despite the fact that many people—particularly the elderly, the young and the mobile—find it more convenient to rent.

In the 1980s, a mood of euphoria surrounded the housing market. It has now gone, perhaps never to return. The idea, fostered by the Government, that housing was a dead cert bet, not just for profitable investment but for a secure future, has now been blown out of the water. As another hon. Member said, we must ask why we are in this position and why we are having this debate. Who have been in power for the past 16 years? Who refused to allow local authorities to invest money from council house sales in building new homes to replace them, despite the fact that one million households are on waiting lists? Who stoked up the economy in 1987-88 with what many people believe were cynical tax cuts for short-term political gain? The result was an excessive boom and the housing market has paid the price in excessive interest rates. The economy then had to be damped down.

Mr. Peter Brooke (City of London and Westminster, South): The hon. Lady has just observed that the tax cuts of 1987 and 1988 were intended for short-term political gain. As she would be the first to challenge the Government if they introduced a tax cut in the immediate run-up to an election, when does she think would be an appropriate time to have one?

Mrs. Maddock: As the right hon. Gentleman will know, my view is that people are not asking for tax cuts at the moment. Last Sunday's papers show that people are only too happy to pay for what they believe the nation needs, such as a better health service. When the economy is booming and doing well, and when people have good jobs and homes, perhaps one could think about tax cuts, but we are certainly not in that position now.

Whose reliance on mortgage interest tax relief conspicuously failed to provide proper support for those on low incomes? The Minister's speech today was evidence of that. Now mortgage interest relief at source is being phased out with no thought about how that fits in with an overall housing strategy. The Government's economic short-termism has created mayhem with interest rates—some describe it as a rollercoaster—which has thrown the housing market into turmoil. Since the Government have been in office, inflation has been as high as 22 per cent. and almost as low almost 1 per cent. Interest rates have gone from 10 per cent. to 20 per cent. to 7 per cent. to 15 per cent. to 5.25 per cent., and they are probably on their way up again.

Who now propose cuts in housing benefit which will deter private landlords from letting houses? Who propose cuts to income support for mortgage holders, which everyone in housing, whatever the sector, agrees will lead to more repossessions and homelessness? And who now propose less help for those with mortgages when they lose their jobs? It is the current Government—the same people who are nervously milling around the button marked "emergency reverse". We heard proposals in that respect this afternoon.

We are in the present position because of the way in which the Government have played around with the economy and the housing market for what we and many other people believe was short-term electoral gain. Where the Government should have ensured stability, they have played fast and loose with interest rates and tax cuts. Where they should have encouraged sensible, sustainable home ownership, they have led families into mortgage misery with arrears piling up, unable to move because they owe more than their homes are worth. Where the Government should have brought security, they have brought a flood of repossessions—more than 300,000 in the past five years—and with them, family breakdowns, stress and other serious problems.

For millions more people, the Government's policies have brought an ever-present fear of homelessness, which haunts them day and night. If the Englishman's home is his castle, the Government have let down the drawbridge, drained the moat and sent the guards away, leaving the occupants vulnerable to attacks from the dark knights of sickness, unemployment and recession. For many, the fear is that they will lose not just their homes but their livelihoods. A considerable proportion of small businesses are set up with bank loans using family homes as collateral. According to a survey carried out last year, more than 60 per cent. of overdrafts to small businesses in 1994 depended at least partly on personal collateral, which is nearly always the family home. In that way, home and job are tied up together so that if the one is lost, so is the other. Such a double blow—a double whammy—can be shattering.

The Government are guilty of an astonishing misdirection of priorities. They have concentrated all their fire on grants, loans and other incentives to tempt people into home ownership but then largely abdicated their responsibility for helping people when they are threatened with losing their homes. The Government have regularly espoused the virtues of the free market but they have tilted that market to encourage entry into home ownership at unsustainable levels. They allowed mortgage interest tax relief to fuel spiralling house prices in boom times, but when people need it most they decide to take it away without a word of warning.

Unlike the Government, the Liberal Democrats have been consistent in their policy. We have always believed that MIRAS and income support for mortgage holders should be replaced by a much more coherent, effective and means-tested benefit that will help home owners on low incomes, and we have been roundly condemned by Conservative Members for daring to suggest that we would do that. Yet that it is precisely what the Government have been doing in recent years. But the Government have not just phased out MIRAS for new mortgage holders: they have taken it away from the very people whom they tempted into owner-occupation in the first place.

I do not remember the Government saying, "Buy a house but be careful how much you spend because we are thinking of cutting mortgage interest tax relief." Their message has always been, "Buy a house. Get a mortgage. We are on your side and we shall support you. You can

[Mrs. Maddock]

rely on us." It is another broken promise and people are so angry about it that today we have heard Conservative Members proposing to reverse it.

The Government could have not have picked a worse time to begin to reduce MIRAS. They are kicking the market when it is down. The time to cut MIRAS gradually is when the market is healthy, and we should not hit those people with existing mortgages who have made their financial plans on that basis. We as Liberal Democrats have always said that we would phase MIRAS out slowly over two Parliaments. We would not hit the market with 10 per cent. cuts in 12 months, as the Government have done, and we certainly would not do anything with the market as it is at the moment.

The Labour party's record is not much better. For years it has prevaricated about what to do about mortgage interest tax relief. Despite the fact that the Rowntree foundation, Shelter, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the National Housing Forum and even its own Commission on Social Justice have recommended replacing MIRAS with a mortgage benefit, the Labour party has prevaricated. Once again, on a major policy issue we are less than sure where Labour stands. I think that the message I got from Labour today was that, like ourselves, it does not want to do anything at the moment. But where the Labour party stands on mortgage interest tax relief in the long run remains unclear.

The Government have pursued a chain of policies across the housing spectrum which have encompassed a blind faith in owner-occupation and a determination to run down the public sector, regardless of the consequences. The Government's negative attitude to social housing has led to cut after cut in new building, until we have reached the stage where fewer affordable homes to rent will be built in this financial year than in any year since the war. Yet there are now 2 million households in unsuitable accommodation. Some are in hostels or board and lodgings, while others are squatting, sleeping on friends' floors and are often forced to share with a host household.

In the Budget, total housing spending for the next three years was cut by more than £1.5 billion. While housing need has never been higher, investment has not been lower for a long time. Perhaps the most frustrating thing for many of us is that we can see where the money is going: it is paying the unemployment benefit, income support, housing benefit and family credit of the construction workers who have lost their jobs.

The case of a gentleman in my constituency illustrates clearly where 16 years of Tory housing policies have led us. He worked in the construction industry earning a good salary in the boom 1980s and took out a mortgage on a house at a high price at that time. As things got worse, however, he lost his job. Although the Government help him with his interest payments, he is trapped in that house. When he goes to the employment office, he is told that he must take a job at wages which he knows full well will not cover the payments on his house. Being a responsible man, he goes to the people who lent him the money for his mortgage, who say that they will repossess his home as soon as he defaults when he gets a job. His next stop is the housing association, where he is told that if that occurs he will knowingly be homeless and therefore the housing association will not have any responsibility towards him. That encapsulates clearly what has happened as a result of the Government's policies in the past 16 years.

The Government should be investing in building affordable new housing to rent in the public sector, and they could start with a phased release of the capital receipts which are held in local authority bank accounts. We know that the Government will say "What about the public sector borrowing requirement?" But respectable people in finance know that if there is the will to change the way we work, we could do it. We could get more money invested in housing, and that would mean more jobs.

We need a comprehensive mortgage benefit. The Government should be using the money saved by the cuts that they have made in MIRAS to create a coherent and reinforced safety net for mortgage holders. That is what my party has proposed for a number of years. Another subject which needs tackling is housing benefit, which traps people in poverty because they cannot afford to work.

We certainly need to see an end to boom and bust economics. We need an accountable central bank which looks after interest rates—which the bank itself would set, subject to targets set by Parliament—to take politics out of interest rates and avoid interest rate variability. We have consistently put forward those proposals in recent years, and we have warned the Government about the consequences of their short-term economics for housing and the economy. They have not listened, and we are paying the price. That is one of the reasons for the debate today.

It is vital to our economic future that we have a flexible and stable housing market. People who are tied up by negative equity or who are held by housing shortages are not just being trapped in cramped or sub-standard accommodation. They are often being locked out of work and into poverty. They are being held back from reaching their full potential, and our economy is suffering as a result.

The national debate on housing has reached a crucial point, and the choice is fairly stark. Either housing will continue to descend to the level of a party political football—with the Government using blind and illogical measures to push home ownership to unsustainable levels while increasingly abandoning mortgage holders to the effects of the economy—or we can take the alternative route that my party has proposed. We need a strong safety net for home owners and tenants alike so that families can feel secure in their homes even when they are under threat in their jobs. We do not need the Government's proposals to hit income support for mortgage holders. It would be wrong to do that at any time, but people in all sectors of housing believe that now is definitely not the time for the Government's proposals. It is time that the Government started to listen to people. More importantly, it is time that they took responsibility for their actions over the past 16 years.

6.36 pm

Mr. Charles Hendry (High Peak): First, I declare an interest in that I am the chairman of a group of companies involved in the private rented sector. On a non-pecuniary basis, I am chairman of the all-party homelessness group, a trustee of the Big Issue charitable trust and a friend of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, whose report in many ways stimulated this debate.

It has to be one of life's more unpleasant experiences to wake up to the dulcet tones of the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) on "Today" saying that we are to have a debate on housing this week. That is what we heard last week.

Mr. Dobson: I was telling the truth.

Mr. Hendry: We always expect the hon. Gentleman to tell the truth, but that does not make it any more pleasant.

We discovered today that soundbites and media presentation are rather more important than the Opposition's policies. I have listened intently to the speeches made so far in the debate, and we are no nearer knowing where Labour currently stands on this issue. One might have thought that a policy would come out of an Opposition Supply day.

We do not know yet what Labour's policy is towards a mortgage benefit. My hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) intervened on the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to ask about that, and was told that the hon. Gentleman would come back to the subject. He did not do so, and has now left the Chamber. He may have left it to the hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) to deal with in his winding-up speech. I hope that he will do so.

We do not know whether the Labour party wants to extend the current scheme. We know that 70 per cent. of people are not covered by it at present. We know that it is not adequate, but we do not know whether the Labour party would extend it to cover more people. Labour Members are simply saying what they believe to be politically popular to catch another few minutes' slot on the news tonight or tomorrow morning.

It is cynical in the extreme for the Labour party to choose this subject for a Supply day debate. In many ways, the empty Opposition Benches bear that view out. Labour Members know that they cannot speak with a straight face on the housing market and home ownership, and they have decided to remain absent from the debate.

Mr. Raynsford: Where are all the Tory Members?

Mr. Hendry: It is not our Supply day. The Opposition have chosen the subject. We know that, within a few hours, the Labour Whips will be scurrying around the House asking whether their Back Benchers can speak in the debate as they are a bit short of hon. Members who want to speak.

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): The Whips are already doing that.

Mr. Hendry: That shows the depth of the Labour party's thinking and its commitment.

We can tell from the Labour party's record how committed it is. When we introduced the right to buy—the most important measure for extending home ownership ever—the Labour party opposed it. Even when the national party had decided grudgingly to accept it, Labour-controlled local authorities throughout the country were doing their best to thwart it.

We know that home owners would be hit by a Labour Government because of Labour's spending policies. The Labour party may not commit to them now, but if it were in office it could not bear to keep the lid on them. That would inevitably lead to higher taxes and to high interest rates—one of the most damaging factors for home owners.

Day by day, home owners see the cost of Labour. If people aspire to improve their house and push it up a council tax band, or aspire to buy a better house, everywhere we look, band by band, Labour councils cost them more—from £99 in band A to nearly £300 for more expensive properties. That shows Labour's commitment to home ownership.

If the Labour party wants to try to be the friend of home owners, perhaps it should start by recognising some of the facts. Since 1971, the number of houses has increased by 3.25 million, and 2 million of them have been built since the Government came to power 16 years ago.

The hon. Member for Alyn and Deeside (Mr. Jones) said that the number of houses being built by the council in his constituency had dropped, but he did not tell us how many more homes were being built by housing associations. How sad it is that he chose to show us only a small and distorted element of the picture.

Mr. Betts: Is not the hon. Gentleman in danger of misleading the House, albeit inadvertently? The truth is that, last year, only 500 council houses were built and the number of housing association properties built fell. Fewer properties for rent were built last year than in any year since the war. Housing association new build has not replaced council new build. The total for both combined has fallen to the lowest level ever.

Mr. Hendry: Certainly the total number of houses built has fallen, but a key factor is the number of new lettings taking place. The figure for last year shows a key movement in the rented sector. The number of new lettings has been rising consistently in recent years, and last year it was at its highest level—

Mr. Dobson: Since when?

Mr. Hendry: For the hon. Gentleman's information, it was the highest level ever. Perhaps he would like to use that soundbite when he is next on the "Today" programme.

The number of mortgages has increased dramatically. In 1980, only 6.2 million people had mortgages; now, 10.4 million have them, and that figure has not dropped during the recent difficult years in the housing market. Year on year, the number of people taking out mortgages has grown.

On the other side of the spectrum, in 11 successive quarters, the number of families accepted as homeless has dropped. It is a shame that political parties and the pressure groups outside, which are so ready to see two months of bad figures as a trend, will sometimes not see 11 quarters of good figures as something to be welcomed. The home ownership ratio—the ratio between peoples' incomes and the cost of buying a house—is at its most favourable for 10 years. There is a tremendous improvement in many of the housing indicators, and the House should welcome them.

We should also welcome the fact that housing standards have never been higher. The housing improvement survey, taking into account the way in which standards were measured and changes were brought in, shows that housing standards are better than they have ever been.

[Mr. Hendry]

That has happened in the context of a Government spending commitment of more than £20 billion on housing this year, last year and the year before.

The debate shows us the Labour party scurrying about the political spectrum, not because of an issue of principle but because it has spotted some potential votes of which it may be able to catch hold. That will not wash in the longer run.

We hope that the hon. Member for Greenwich will tell us where he now stands on MIRAS, because we know that he has called for it to be phased out over a period of five to 10 years. He is minuted as having said that, so I hope that if that is not his view now he will distance himself clearly from it. We know one answer that we shall not hear—that Labour will commit itself absolutely to holding down public spending to avoid rising interest rates, which are the biggest curse that affect people who own their own homes.

Fundamentally, the debate is about repossessions. Their number has fallen. The level now is 35 per cent.—one third—below its peak. There are also encouraging figures on the level of arrears. The number of people who are more than 12 months in arrears has fallen by a quarter. There has also been a fall in the total amount of arrears.

Much has been made of levels of negative equity. I understand the concern, but let us recognise the facts there, too. There are now 1.2 million homes with a total negative equity of £7.2 billion. That compares with 1.8 million homes two years ago, when the total negative equity was just below £12 billion. The total level of negative equity per property has dropped from £6,500 to £5,800. All those indicators show a move in the right direction, and many families who were experiencing negative equity a year ago have now moved out of it altogether.

We cannot rewrite history, but we can be absolutely certain about one thing—that almost all the repossessions could have been avoided if there had been comprehensive mortgage protection. We shall not find anybody who has lost his home in recent years who does not now wish that he had taken out a mortgage insurance policy.

What the Government are proposing is right, not only for the taxpayer but for home owners, because it would give them the security that the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock) said was so important. We insure our furniture, our treasured possessions and our lives; we even insure our holidays in case they are cancelled or we cannot take them. Surely it makes sense to insure the most important purchase that we shall ever make in our lives—our home, which is the roof above our family's heads.

Seventy per cent. of people would not be covered by income support if they lost their job. The cruelty of the Opposition's approach is that it gives a false sense of security and makes more people believe that they would be covered by income support than has ever been the case. Indeed, in the past, too many people have erroneously believed that they were covered and, tragically, have found out to their cost that they were not.

The building societies are responding constructively. We have heard what the Skipton building society is doing. If it is the fact that my hon. Friend the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration represents the constituency of Skipton and Ripon that has encouraged the Skipton to be so constructive, I wish that all building societies would set up their headquarters there. There may be discussions about how far such a scheme would go, but after the discussion this morning with the chief executive of one of the largest building societies in the country, I know that other societies are considering following the Skipton's lead.

The response of the Association of British Insurers to the Government's proposals has already been mentioned, but it may be worth picking up a couple of points from it. For example, it says:

> "Unlike income support, there is no savings test, and the circumstances of other members of the family are not taken into account.
>
> It is reasonable to expect that as a result of the recently-announced changes in income support, more people will take out mortgage protection insurance. This factor, combined with falling unemployment, should reduce the cost of such insurance . . . There are likely to be very few people who will meet a mortgage lender's eligibility criteria but who will not be eligible for Mortgage Payment Protection insurance."

That is the voice of the organisation that represents the firms that would be responsible for providing the insurance. It believes that the firms can do it, and do it in a comprehensive way—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Greenwich may laugh, but there will be a moral, if not legal, obligation on those organisations. Even before they have started to develop policies in intricate detail, they believe that they can meet the objective. I find it slightly sad that Labour's housing spokesman finds that something to giggle at.

We must recognise the limited extent of the Government's proposal. They do not propose the removal of income support for all time, but for a limited period—the first nine months of new mortgages. On an average mortgage of about £33,000 at an interest rate of 8 per cent. the total cost would be £2,000 over nine months. We should see the proposal in context. We have had discussions about how much the premiums should be and whether they should be £150 or £250, which would mean an extra £3 or £5 a week.

We should ask people whether they would rather spend £3 or £5 on a house that is £1,000 or £2,000 more expensive or have an absolutely cast-iron assurance that, if they lost their job or fell into difficult circumstances, they would not lose the roof over their head. The policy offers greater security than has ever been available before.

The hon. Member for Christchurch spoke about the double whammy of people losing their jobs and then losing their houses. If everyone took out mortgage insurance, we could remove that threat, and if a person lost their job, they could be assured that they would not also lose the roof over their head. There are also other exemptions, such as involve people who are over 60. The Government are consulting further as to whether those exemptions should be extended.

We must look at the subject in context. We must also ask the building societies to examine the way in which they operate. In the past, they have been too quick to lend people money without taking them aside and saying, "Interest rates may be low at the moment, but if they went up to 12 or 15 per cent. could you afford it?" There should be almost an obligation on building societies to encourage people to think, "Maybe I can afford that mortgage now,

but if my circumstances changed, if one partner stopped working or lost their job, could we continue to afford the mortgage at a higher rate of interest?".

Not surprisingly, there have been some comments on MIRAS, following the comment of Baroness Thatcher last night. It should perhaps be remembered that the biggest change in mortgage interest tax relief happened in the 1988 Budget, when double mortgage relief was removed. It was not removed overnight; it was phased out. We should recall that that created a tremendous growth in the property market before it dropped overnight. Perhaps the right hon. and noble Lady might care to remember who was in charge of the Administration at that time. She spoke about the level at which interest relief was payable being increased to £30,000, but had it been increased in line with the rate of inflation under her Administration, it would have been £60,000 rather than £30,000.

If home ownership is the way in which people prefer to live, and independent surveys by Shelter and other organisations suggest that 80 per cent. of people want to own their own homes, it seems strange that Government subsidies support the non-preferred systems of housing, such as renting, but are being removed from the preferred system of housing.

There is a good, but not absolutely comprehensive, case for assisting first-time buyers as this is an uniquely favourable time for many of them to enter the market, but we should view any move to extend MIRAS for first-time buyers against the background of falling interest rates. People who buy a house now on an average mortgage will pay £130 a month less than they would have paid in October 1990.

We have heard repeated calls for more money to be ploughed into building 100,000 new houses, or whatever, a year. I am certain that if 100,000 new houses were being built, the Opposition would say that the figure should be 200,000. Whatever the figure, we can be certain that the Opposition will double it.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Does my hon. Friend agree that that observation leads on to another problem for us to ponder? We have not managed to free up the rental market enough and, even after the reforms, we have still to do a great deal more to reduce the pressure on the housing market.

Mr. Hendry: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising that point. I hope that the Government will move in that direction because the private rented sector has a key part to play in the balance and it needs further development.

The solution should not always be to build more social housing. There are about 100,000 empty flats above shops. Not only are they a wasted resource, but bringing people back into city and town centres is a socially desirable objective. There are some 780,000 empty properties in Britain. Many of them are owned by local authorities—predominantly Labour-controlled authorities—but the overwhelming majority are in the private sector. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) suggested, we should encourage those properties back into use.

Mr. Dobson: What about Suffolk Coastal?

Mr. Hendry: The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras, again from a sedentary position and with his usual charm that so endears him to the people of the country says, "What about Suffolk Coastal?".

The case for Suffolk Coastal is quite remarkable. That local authority has sold off the overwhelming majority of its social housing stock in a large-scale voluntary transfer. It has shown tremendous responsibility by keeping a small number of houses to meet the needs of homelessness in the borough. That is a way forward that many others should follow. A small percentage of residual stock is kept empty to enable the local authority to house homeless people with great speed. I should have thought that the hon. Gentleman would welcome that.

We should also encourage housing associations to feel the exciting and exhilarating wind of competition. I hope that the Government will soon announce that the housing association grants will also be made available to private developers and that money will be recycled to housing associations by extending the right to buy to those who live in housing association properties.

We must also take steps to make the housing waiting lists in local authorities operate better and more efficiently. The Government have already put forward proposals and I hope that it will not be long before they make a firm commitment to them.

As joint chairman of the all-party group on homelessness, there is nothing I want to see more than the scourge of homelessness removed. The Government's proposal, whereby everybody would have mortgage protection insurance, is a key element in that process. It would mean that we could begin to remove once and for all the fear of people who lose their jobs that they may also lose their homes.

It is sad that, once again, in today's debate Labour has shown that where there is a choice between easy popularity and responsible government, easy popularity always wins and responsible government is relegated.

6.57 pm

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson (Coventry, North-West): I must comment straight away on the speech by the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) who, despite his clear knowledge of the subject that we are debating today and the range of interests that he rightly disclosed, would appear to be living in a different country. He talks about letting being at an all-time high, but overlooks the fact that a significant proportion of new rentals are simply transfers within the local government market, and if one removes them from the statistics, the figures are far from the level that he would lead us to believe.

The hon. Gentleman talks about the number of repossessions falling, but overlooks the fact that they are still running at more than 50,000 a year. There are 1,000 a week and the number is rising. If I were on the Conservative Benches, the last thing in the world that I would want to refer to is repossessions. If one walks down the streets in the well-to-do suburbs that many Conservative Members represent, one can see that the "For Sale" signs are going back up. Repossessions are again increasing in number.

The hon. Gentleman talks about negative equity as if the Government had achieved some marvellous success in reducing it. He tells us that there are only 1.25 million home owners whose houses are worth less than the

[Mr. Geoffrey Robinson]

mortgage taken out on them. What sort of achievement is that? He did not tell us that it is an enormous number, nor did he mention that it is increasing yet again.

Mr. Hendry *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Robinson: It is increasing again; repossessions are increasing and negative equity is increasing, and we are confronted with a genuine crisis in the market. The hon. Member for High Peak, as chairman of the all-party homelessness and housing need group, which must be one of the most socially oriented and worthwhile organisations in the House, should be deeply worried about those issues instead of trying to place the best gloss on what is a terrible position for the Government.

However, there is one matter on which I would tend to agree with the hon. Member for High Peak, yet again I must fundamentally disagree with him. I am pleased to see the Secretary of State returning to the Chamber, because I wanted to intervene in his speech about that issue—insurance—earlier. I am grateful that he has returned.

I happen to agree with the Secretary of State and the hon. Member for High Peak that, if we could achieve a comprehensive insurance policy to cover mortgages for those who have taken them out, that would be very worth while. Throughout the House we would agree—it has been said already and it bears repeating—that there are two essential things in the lives of our citizens. One is a job—or jobs, in two-parent families, if they can get them—and the other is a house. If one places the other at risk, it is a dramatic situation.

I said earlier, and I say again now that the Secretary of State is back, that the fact that we have approximately 1.25 million people with negative equity, that there are 50,000 repossessions a year and the figure is increasing, and that we have so much homelessness, to which the hon. Member for High Peak—chairman of the all-party homelessness group—referred, shows that there is a major problem.

The uncertainty will persist because, whatever the Secretary of State says about Labour Front-Bench Members and our proposals, there are a few precious months before we shall have to declare them as the next Government. It will happen. We shall have to. There is no doubt about that.

However, we are now worried about what the Government will do about that position. The Secretary of State got off lightly earlier because he was able to focus on the narrow issue in the Opposition motion of insurance for mortgages. If he is really telling us that he is confident that, on the back of that remarkable initiative from the Skipton, we shall now have a nationwide—"cast-iron", I think, was the phrase used by the hon. Member for High Peak—insurance policy covering all mortgage holders, I would rejoice with him. It would be a tremendous achievement.

However, the Secretary of State knows as well as I do that subscribing for insurance for mortgage risks is an extremely difficult, if not impossible, proposition, with the best will in the world. I defy any of the big insurance companies to come up with a policy that will work. We know that two thirds of people who have taken out insurance have found, when they came to cash it in, that it did not work. Those are the figures that we have. If the Secretary of State wants to correct me, I would be delighted to hear him do so.

Mr. Lilley: It is Department of Employment research.

Mr. Robinson: I know.

Mr. Lilley: Twelve claimants were interviewed.

Mr. Robinson: I have no doubt that, as the Secretary of State is so committed to that issue—it is important and I am with him on it—he will do better research to find out what the true figure is.

I shall come to another matter in a moment, because "sophistry" is an in word at the moment and the Secretary of State was indulging in a great deal of it in his speech. However, I challenge the right hon. Gentleman, in his heart of hearts, to give us the terms of the policies that will be underwritten, which will give a cast-iron guarantee to people who have mortgages that, in the event that they lose their job, they will be able to cash in the policies and prevent a repossession. I do not believe that it is possible, and it is a cruel hoax on the people to put it as a realistic proposition.

Then the Secretary of State said that the policy would pay for itself—that that would come from the margins because the Skipton building society was offering free insurance to gain a competitive advantage. Correct. He then said, "But of course all the others will follow suit". I say that there is no competitive advantage once the whole market is covered and all mortgage lenders are doing the same thing.

If the Secretary of State, who is the arch apostle of market forces—the one who believes in supply and demand, the profit motive and so on—believes that, once a pattern of behaviour is established for all providers in a given service, they will continue to do that out of their own margins, he lives in cloud cuckoo land. Obviously, mortgage lenders will pass on the costs. It would be worth doing if it could be done properly, but all it will do, in the meantime, is depress the market further by making the cost of borrowing more expensive.

That brings us to the nub of the Opposition's case—the timing of these perverse proposals. When the market is flat on its back, one does not go on kicking it. When one is in a hole, one does not go on digging. When a company or an industrial sector is in difficulties, one does not clobber it further. That is the golden rule for anyone who wants to handle pragmatically and constructively problems that inevitably arise in various sectors and at various times in the economy.

Instead of doing that, the Government, for a reason that I cannot understand, have chosen to tackle insurance, social service provision for mortgage interest and tax relief on mortgage interest. At the very time when we need measures to revive and sustain the market, the Government have chosen to indulge in those perverse measures to depress it further.

It is equally inane to pretend that no crisis exists. Some figures were mentioned earlier, but we know that sales of existing housing are down. We know that starts on new houses—I heard the figure today—are at an all-time low, lower than since the second world war.

We know that prices are down. The Halifax building society's figures say that they are 1 per cent. down on a year ago, and 10 to 15 per cent. down on a few years ago. There are 1 million people in negative equity and the number is increasing.

The construction industry is the next example that I give the House. I read today, sadly, in the "Companies & Markets" section of the *Financial Times*, that a major provincial house builder had issued a profit warning. The chief executive said that the company was being clobbered because it was the first house builder to announce a profits warning, and that the company felt it right that it should let its shareholders know the way things stood. However, he says—it is clearly quoted in the *Financial Times*—that the company is only the first in a series of similar companies in the house building industry that will announce severe profit warnings.

If that does not amount to a crisis, I do not know what does. Moreover, we all know it. I do not want to indulge in describing the problems that we have in Coventry, but it is simply incorrect that in Coventry, the private sector is replacing the houses that the public sector no longer builds—to take another argument from the speech of the hon. Member for High Peak. The private sector is not nearly replacing what we have lost from the public sector's building programme.

We are in crisis, and we need remedial action from the Government. It is no good trying, as the Secretary of State, perhaps smugly, has done today, to sneak out of the debate on the narrow issue of insurance and to say, "We shall now have a nationwide programme put in place to deal with that"—first, because he knows that, in all probability, it will not work and, secondly, because he knows that, in itself, it will not be remotely enough to solve the major problem in the housing market.

It is not for me necessarily to say what I think should be done, but the Government could do two things. Obviously, I do not speak for Labour Front-Bench Members, but I wish not to speak to them or for them. I want to speak to the Government and persuade the Government to do something; they are the people who can do it. They are the people who suffer most from the instability in the market. They are the people who suffer most from the pervading sense of insecurity that the job position is creating, which now also permeates the housing market.

The Government could do two things, one of which is Labour policy. They could allow a phased release of the housing capital receipts in the possession of local authorities, to be spent on affordable rented accommodation. If the Government were not ideologically blinkered against that, they would realise that it is the obvious thing to do. The resources are there. That is within the borrowing requirement already as they are capital receipts. I know that it can be argued within the Treasury and within Departments whether we need to increase the public sector borrowing requirement. In my opinion, it need not be treated in that way.

The second thing that the Government could do—which would, in all probability, involve a further increase in borrowing and in the PSBR—would be to help first-time buyers. That proposal has been made from the Government Back Benches and it merits Government consideration. The alternative is to sit the whole thing out and say, "It will get better; we do not have to worry. If we simply sit back, the thing will recover in the normal course of events." No doubt it will. Perhaps it will. But how many more people will have their homes unnecessarily repossessed as a result of that laid-back attitude?

I am sure that every Conservative Member would have a different attitude if it were their house, their mother's house or a family house that was going to be repossessed. Let us think about it for a second in that context. If it was so, Conservative Members would have a totally different attitude.

One might sit back and say, "Let's leave it to the market," but how many more people do we needlessly have to put through that hoop, and how much longer do many people who need housing have to wait, simply because the Government believe that the market will right itself in the fulness of time? I will be second to no one in subscribing to the usefulness of market forces. But the point of government is to reinforce market forces and to make them work effectively through Government action when it is required. I put it to the Secretary of State that it is one of those occasions in the market at this time. If he could get beyond his narrow ideological focus and come closer to the real human suffering involved, I believe that he would take action to deal with the problem.

7.9 pm

Mr. George Walden (Buckingham): Having listened to some of the contributions to the debate, I am reminded of how difficult it is becoming to discuss a whole series of absolutely fundamental subjects openly and frankly in this place. For example, hon. Members on both sides of the House know that the social security budget cannot continue at anything like its present level. Yet neither Front Bench can address openly the question of radical cuts—although I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security, who has made some suggestions in that regard.

Hon. Members on both sides of the House know that we cannot continue indefinitely spending more and more on the national health service, yet we must all pretend that we can. Hon. Members on both sides of the House have known for years that mortgage tax relief is indiscriminate, expensive, wasteful and inflationary, and that it militates against the private rented sector and distorts the entire economy. Yet no one can say that outright.

The speech by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) was notable for a certain shiftiness—uncharacteristic in a man who is so upright as to be elongated—on the question of mortgage tax relief. It is a sterile sort of debate when no one is able to tell the truth for fear that someone out there may be listening. The reason for that collective reticence is simple: we are all afraid of making the insecure middle classes feel even more insecure. I somehow doubt that it makes them feel better to know that their elected representatives are avoiding the issue.

The debate in the media and in the pubs is really about whether the Government should take action to inflate house prices artificially. If we cut through much of the debate on both sides of the House, we shall find that that is what we are discussing today. One does not have to be a genius to understand the politics of the matter: people quite like it when they are given money for nothing. The more owner-occupiers there are, the easier it is for us to

[Mr. George Walden]

ingratiate ourselves to 70 per cent. of the country at a stroke by giving them money for nothing. Who does not feel a secret gratification when told that his or her main capital asset is worth more than it really is?

The trouble is that we can fool the public only some of the time. We are having this debate today because the housing market became a farce in the late 1980s. The farce then became a circus and the circus became a pantomime, and many people who were assured at the time that they would enjoy the pantomime are now running to us in tears. For a few years the British public were led to believe that every Englishman's home was worth the price of a castle, or at least the price of a gatehouse from which one could hope one day to graduate to the castle. It was a cruel illusion.

It is convenient for us to pretend today that that situation resulted entirely from artificially low interest rates due to shadowing the deutschmark. It is very easy for us to shuffle all our problems, in one form or another, on to the exchange rate mechanism. The truth is far less comforting—particularly for my party, I am sorry to say. The truth is that the last Administration wilfully, wrongheadedly and irresponsibly encouraged people to believe the myth that home ownership of itself brings economic security and unearned financial gains.

Let us go to the root of the matter in so far as my party is concerned. The slogan "a home-owning democracy" is as appealing as motherhood, but unlike motherhood it is not a primary necessity for civilisation. The phrase is a logical nonsense; even worse, it is a dangerous nonsense in terms of modern Conservative philosophy. Of course, no one can oppose home ownership—it is a measure of where we have come to that it is necessary to spell that out. If we accept the idea that we can have a real democracy only when people own their own homes, we are back in the 19th century pre-reform days. If a real democracy can exist only when people own their own homes, the United States, with its high levels of rented accommodation, cannot be much of a democracy. So we are talking absurdities when we use the phrase "a home-owning democracy".

The modern Conservative party is supposed to be about choice and responsibility—that is how I understand it, but perhaps I am mistaken. People must decide themselves whether they want to own their own homes and how they should invest their savings or capital. It is for them to decide whether they should rent instead. A combination of Labour's bigotry against landlords and the tax privileges that we hand out to home owners has resulted in a scandalously overdeveloped private rented market. In that sense, we have deprived people of choice. Instead, we have fed them with illusion. That is a fundamental reason why they are so angry with the Government now.

At the heart of the whole dismal business lies a contradiction in our political thinking. It is summed up in two conflicting political slogans. The first is, "Get on your bike," which I think makes excellent sense in an international as well as a national context; and the second slogan is, "Get on the housing ladder," which is a cruel and a cynical nonsense. However one dresses it up, the Government of the day tipped the public the wink that buying a house was a sure-fire investment underwritten by Government subsidies and guarantees.

For that reason, it is absurd to say—I was sorry to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State say it on the "Today" programme this morning—that 80 per cent. of people want to own their own homes. Of course they will say that if one asks them. If one asks them whether they want bigger houses than the ones they own at present, they will probably say yes to that as well. It has been dinned into them that home ownership is the only route to financial security. And behind it all is the secret hope that, who knows, one day we could all clamber back on the house-price carousel and set the whole unstable machine spinning again.

It is not merely a question of economic policy or the ups and downs of the housing market; it is a question of the relationship between Governments and the electorate. Do we want to treat the public as economic morons? Do we want to lead them into financial extravagance and irresponsibility by encouraging them to believe that their future can be based securely on inflated and publicly subsidised house prices?

So much for the inglorious past; we start from where we are, which is in a deep black hole. Climbing out of the hole is the easiest thing in the world: all one has to do is rig up some rescue package involving the rate or amount of mortgage tax relief or to devise some scheme designed to help first-time home buyers. I was sorry to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) advance just such a proposal. Most of such schemes—I mean no offence to my right hon. Friend or to any other hon. Members on either side of the House who have advocated them—are of dubious economic honesty. I say that because, consciously or unconsciously, we all know perfectly well that the effect of those schemes will be to provide an artificial stimulus to the housing market, which will result in rising prices.

If we were to do what some hon. Members on both sides of the House have suggested, the result would be higher prices—perhaps just at the margin, we must not exaggerate; but higher prices nevertheless. My right hon. Friend thought that knock-on effects of that kind would prove positive. But what would really happen? Higher house prices would feed through into higher mortgages in a country where mortgage debt is wholly disproportionate to individual earnings and to our national wealth. That, in turn, would increase pressure for higher wages and that, in turn, would impact on inflation and competition. Macro-economically, the effect would be to divert funds from investment in the productive economy into sterile bricks and mortar.

The policy of the present Administration to date seems to me to have been highly responsible. They have trimmed back the inflation-producing machine of mortgage tax relief and stressed that they have no wish for a housing boom. They have begun shifting the burden for insuring mortgages to where it belongs. I am entirely behind my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on that and he deserves personal credit, all the more so because it is naturally unpopular to have to tell people that they must take responsibility for their own actions. There has been, I am glad to say, some easing up on the use of the infantile slogan of "a home-owning democracy", although it still crops up from time to time.

We are now told that the country cannot take the medicine and that because some people are caught in negative equity, the solution must be to give the whole damn shooting match a boost. I understand that the

medicine is not pleasant. I face people on the doorstep and at surgeries, as do other hon. Members. It would help ease the pain if the Government were to explain frankly that the medicine is for the long-term health of the economy and that we should continue to take it.

The aim cannot, and must not, be higher house prices. We want stable and sensible house prices and the encouragement of a private rented sector. We should remember that the international financial community watches debates such as this. The question for it is whether the Government are serious in their anti-inflation policies or whether they are going to play games with their people and, therefore, with inflation. If we start fooling around with tax relief, in whatever way, on the pretext that it is temporary, who will believe it? Once mortgage tax relief is raised, who would dare bring it down again, given the trembling middle classes out there?

I cannot remember whether it was inside or outside the House, but I have said that the fundamental problem with Britain is that it is overhoused and undereducated. Let me explain what I mean by overhoused. I took the trouble to check the housing position in France and Germany. Obviously, my figures are general, but they are interesting.

Roughly speaking, we are by far the best-housed people in Europe in terms of rooms per household. Certainly we are better housed than people in France or Germany. We can see that from anecdotal evidence from going around the country. We may think that some of those rows of houses are rather tedious and some are getting on in age, but they are quite luxurious in their way. They are two-down, three-up and have a garden and so on. The figure for Britain is roughly five rooms per household. I am not talking about the condition of housing. There are problems with that, but let us not exaggerate. A lot of those houses are in perfectly good condition and are good living units, to give them a clinical name.

In Germany, a much richer country, there are four rooms on average per household. In France, again a richer country than us, there are three. We know, again anecdotally, that people in France or Germany are not tremendously generously housed. A lot of people live in flats or rented accommodation.

I make that point simply to stress that Britain does not consist solely of people living in cardboard boxes or people with housing problems. I acknowledge those problems, but this country consists mainly of people who are overhoused and overmortgaged. There are masses and masses of people who are overmortgaged in comparison with their earnings. Their lives, again considering international statistics, are distorted by the amount that they are forced or feel obliged—or sometimes are encouraged by Conservative Governments—to spend on their houses. They have high mortgages and they sit at home sweating and eating baked beans.

In other countries, the tendency is for people to spend less on housing and more on amusing themselves, on restaurants, entertainment and so on. Given the choice, I know which way I would like to swing our culture, not least, of course, for economic reasons. It is important for us to recognise in this debate that the entire British financial housing structure is askew, for some of the reasons that I mentioned earlier.

We are told constantly that there is a housing crisis, and the hon. Member for Garscadden gave us the usual list—the Halifax building society and so on. Lists of such bodies crop up in the press every day. Every single one of those bodies is profoundly self-interested in a rise in house prices, and the sooner the better, because they are all in business. They make money out of it. There is nothing that they would like better than to have the Government pour in more money so that their profits can rise. That is what we are talking about.

Believe it or not, I have a little residual realism about the matter. If some independent body could prove to me that such were the catastrophic effects of past policies that the British housing market stands on the edge of a precipice and that it was serious because of the overweening importance of that market and the way that it is linked to all sorts of other financial activities, such as insurance, I would have to take a serious view of a grave situation. I would have to take that view if the independent assessment were that bad, but I have yet to see such evidence. I discount most of the other evidence as self-interested.

I am more impressed by the position of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. Discounting his political necessities, the fundamentals of what he said are right. We have interest rates down and so on. All that is true. I do not want the housing market to take off or go up; I want it to stay where it is rather than go sharply down.

For all those reasons, although I am very much aware of the people who are suffering out there and of the short-term political advantages of throwing them a few more dud fivers to follow the others that we have thrown at them over the years, my inclination would be to do nothing, in an informed way. Naturally, being a realist, I would keep an eye out for any signs of the market really going over the cliff. In that case, we could not stand back and do nothing.

The debate is fundamentally about whether we should bolster popular illusions about the worth of people's assets or tell them the truth. In recent days, we have heard siren calls from someone not completely exempt from responsibility for the hole that we are in. The advice that we got from my right hon. and noble Friend Baroness Thatcher was that we should throw money into the hole. Of course, some hon. Members will remember that that was not the sort of advice that she gave in office. When she was confronted with problems, the last thing she said we should do was to throw money at them.

However, houses—bricks and mortar—it seems, are special. They are a form of spiritual entity for some people, and if they are in trouble, we have to shovel money in their direction. One might suspect, listening to some of these siren calls, that their motive was cheap populism—were it not for the fact that populism never comes cheap.

I am sorry to have taken so long, but, to sum up, it seems to me that the fortunes of the Conservative party have reached the stage where it has nothing to lose by acting responsibly. We might even get some credit for it.

7.28 pm

Mr. Brian H. Donohoe (Cunninghame, South): I wish to draw the House's attention to another aspect of housing. The housing market in my area is in crisis. I represent an Ayrshire constituency which has been subjected to a three-pronged attack by the Government through the early wind-up of the development corporation, the stock transfer of Scottish Homes

[Mr. Brian H. Donohoe]

properties and the continuing attacks on local government housing. The Government's involvement in all three aspects will force massive changes in the tenancy rights of tenants the length and breadth of Ayrshire. Nothing less than an attack on the principle of public sector housing is the charge.

As a Member of Parliament representing a Scottish new town constituency, I am very concerned about the plans to dispose of the development corporation's housing stock before the end of next year. Just two weeks ago, the development corporation authorised the sale of 160 general purpose properties to an association known as the Irvine Housing Association in advance of wind-up at a total cost of some £1.6 million—that works out at an average of some £9,000 per property—despite assurances given by the Scottish Office that all tenants of the new town would be balloted before the wind-up and would have the option to transfer to the local authority landlord. The sale seems to fly in the face of those assurances.

Irvine development corporation is only one of Scotland's five corporations to be transferring major parts of its general needs housing stock to other landlords in advance of wind-up and apparently without there being any bidding to protect the interests of the taxpayer. By next year, nearly one quarter of all the development corporation's tenancies could be under the control of Irvine Housing Association without the tenants having any choice about who their landlord will be.

I understand that the Scottish Office has a policy of diversification. Surely part of that diversification should be that tenants are given choice, but what choice have development corporation tenants in getting any rationale into housing policy if the new tenancy is forced on them? Perhaps the Scottish Office is obsessed with taking housing out of local authority control and putting it in the hands of housing associations. Polls taken in Scotland in development corporation areas suggest that more than 95 per cent. of tenants would, given the option, transfer from Scottish Homes to the local authority. The sale, at about £9,000 a property, is becoming known as the sale of the century.

Despite the apparent modification of the guarantees to development corporation tenants, at least some of those tenants have the choice of the local authority as their landlord. However, that choice is being denied to the tenants of Scottish Homes properties in my constituency and across Scotland. Scottish Homes is disposing of its stock just as Irvine development corporation did, but its tenants are being denied the opportunity to transfer to the local authority landlord.

One has to ask why there is such an anomaly. Scottish Homes tenants cannot understand why they are being denied choice. The only reason why the Scottish Office and Scottish Homes can come up with is that it affords Scottish Homes the opportunity to gain a capital receipt which can then be used to build more homes and pay for investment in housing.

Some two months ago, I obtained figures from James Mellon, the chairman of Scottish Homes, which showed how much Scottish Homes had raised through stock transfer. Until the end of March this year, Scottish Homes sold off nearly 10,500 properties at a combined price of about £65 million. That works out at an average of just over £6,000 for each property. I do not think that that represents a very good deal for the taxpayer. Indeed, it proves that Government dogma is ensuring that public sector housing is sold at knock-down prices, and another sell-off is becoming known as the sale of the century.

Tenants of Scottish Homes have a right to be angered by the way in which their homes are being sold. Scottish Homes has spent more than £3 million establishing and bankrolling housing associations, while only £25,000 has been allocated by Scottish Homes to tell tenants what their rights will be under the new stock transfer.

Tory attacks on the development corporation and Scottish Homes tenants have been the more obvious methods adopted by the Scottish Office to undermine public sector housing, but the systematic underfunding of local authority housing has done the most damage. In 1979, nearly 5,000 homes were built by Scottish councils. By 1982, the number had dropped to just over 2,000 and, last year, fewer than 500 new council houses were built for rent. Those figures speak volumes about the Government's view of Scottish housing. More people than ever before are being made homeless because of mortgage arrears and family breakdown, but the number of council houses being built for rent has been literally decimated in the 16 years of this Government's rule.

The Government's housing policies are wholly out of step with the needs of modern society, especially in Scotland. I see that the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh, West (Lord James Douglas-Hamilton), is now in his seat. Perhaps he can suggest to his colleagues that the Government's housing policies ignore the massive housing crisis and causes cardboard cities and people living rough to move out of the cities and into towns like those in my constituency. They ignore the contradiction in denying Scottish Homes tenants the choice of a local authority landlord while people living in the property next door have that choice because they have a different public sector landlord.

Something is wrong with Government policy—it is fundamentally flawed and requires to be examined. In Ayrshire, public sector housing is under a three-pronged attack which has been masterminded—if that is the right word—by the Secretary of State for Scotland and his Ministers bunkered in new St. Andrew's house. They are out of touch with what the public want from public housing and out of touch with the reality with what it means to spend 12 years on a council waiting list for a house that there is virtually no chance of getting.

The Government's housing policies have failed. The more constituents I have met in the past three years, the more I have become convinced that that is true. The Government's crazy policies have failed my constituents in particular, but they have also failed Scotland and the whole of Britain. It is time that the electorate were given a chance to implement a repossession order on every Government Ministry occupied by the current Administration. That would be the best policy for housing in this country and one that I would commend to the House.

7.37 pm

Mr. David Martin (Portsmouth, South): It has been worth waiting to hear the high standard of contributions made to the debate. I am thinking especially of that of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) with whose speech I wholly agreed. He made a thoughtful

and worthy contribution to a debate on a serious subject which has interested me for many years, especially as it has in my lifetime—certainly my political lifetime—been grounded in mythology.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) said that Labour's hostility to home ownership goes back some 15 years. I think that it goes back further and has also affected my party over the years. The bomb damage caused by the second world war meant massive devastation, mainly to rented accommodation, especially in London. The Rent Acts, which had been introduced after 1917 to deal with the problems of the first world war, were kept in place. Things were made worse after the second world war by all the controls that remained on house building and on the occupation of houses—imposed understandably in some cases, but ideologically by the Labour party in others. There was hostility to ownership and a belief that the Rent Acts should remain, controlling rented housing.

Under Harold Macmillan, as Housing Minister, 300,000 houses a year were promised and 300,000 were built in the course of the 1950s. There was no relief from the Rent Acts until 1957, when common sense returned and there was an attempt to revive the rented sector. But then, Rachman and others ruined the political field, and we unfortunately returned to the ideological battle lines drawn up between rented accommodation and the private sector.

The only options were to own a property or to be in public sector houses—in a council house. Housing associations were not much in evidence then; there were similar bodies, but the movement had not yet taken off.

In 1965 came another Rent Act, which made matters even worse for the rented sector and made it even more imperative that people buy their own homes rather than look to the private rented sector. Throughout the 13 years of Conservative rule—the Churchill, Eden, Macmillan and Douglas-Home Governments—the public sector had been expanded, and it reached its peak in the 1970s, with all that sky-rise housing. The idea was to get people as fast as possible into "units of accommodation"—to use the clinical expression of my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham—even if surrounding neighbourhoods were ruined and demolished. They were badly built, often jerry built. Since then, many of them have had bombs put under them and we have started again.

Throughout, the choice lay between home ownership or public sector housing: the parties divided along those lines. The Labour party's hostility to home ownership was taken on by the Conservatives' property-owning democracy slogans that were so well dealt with by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham.

Little wonder then, as my hon. Friend said, that people became acclimatised to the idea that they must own a home. Failing that, they would hope for a council tenancy near their parents, or at least aspire to getting on the waiting list for one. There was never enough money; there were never enough houses. Instead, waiting lists got longer and longer. Sub-committees were formed in councils, with all the attendant temptations to corruption, in the form of special housing lists: "You come to me and I'll get you a house." That sort of culture entered local government, because the need for housing could never be met.

How to get some sort of sense into the market? In 1975, more legislation was passed which made rented accommodation in the private sector even more difficult. So we come to the mix of the late 1970s and early 1980s, when housing associations came in to try to hold the ring between the death of the private rented sector and the alternative of owning a home. This move was not so much ideologically based. Over the years I have visited many of the initiatives implemented by Portsmouth Housing Trust. Only last Friday I visited some. The trust has certainly plugged gaps in housing need over the years.

Apart from the Rent Acts, we cannot look at the problem without taking into account another extremely distorting factor in the market—mortgage interest relief. It is important to look at its origins. To do that, we need to go back even further than my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham took us. Before 1974 people could get interest relief on any borrowing, not just borrowing for a mortgage. Today is not the first time house prices have spiralled upwards beyond people's ability to pay to stay in them—bankrupting some of them in the process. Others have had their houses repossessed.

In 1972-73 I wanted to enter the housing market. I had practised at the Bar for two or three years, I was living in London and I wanted to buy a house jointly with my brother, having begun save some money. I was living in a controlled tenancy, paying £12 a week with my brother for half a house in Kensington. What a rent to be paying for a property of that kind! No wonder the private rented sector died.

The house that we had been looking at was in Peel street, just north of Kensington High street. Just as we became interested in it, the price doubled, and the mortgage became too expensive for us. In the end, I did not own a house until 1980, when house prices, having fallen considerably in the late 1970s, returned to the sort of level that would enable me to enter the market.

Having seen the stoking up of the market that interest relief on borrowing had brought about, the Labour Government in 1974 introduced mortgage interest relief, allowable on no more than £25,000 paid for a property. That was intended to cap spiralling prices, which had been stoked up by borrowing in 1972-73.

In subsequent years the market levelled out. From the later 1970s until the early 1980s it was a good, buoyant market that people could afford to enter. Much of it was subsidised by mortgage interest relief, but that was not then as noticeable as it later became.

In the 1980s the cost of money—for buying houses, antiques or cars—was highly affordable: money was cheap. It became very cheap in the middle and late 1980s. That factor fed through into the housing market.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield and my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham have taken us down memory lane, to the time when Baroness Thatcher headed the Government. She was good at spending money while saying that she was not doing so and that Ministers should not do so. My right hon. Friend, like my right hon. Friend the Member for Braintree (Mr. Newton), was a successful Secretary of State when health and social security were still combined in one Department, but I clearly remember that expenditure in the Department did not fall during the stewardship of my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield. The rhetoric in Cabinet may have suggested otherwise, but it certainly did not fall.

[Mr. David Martin]

One of the features of Baroness Thatcher's Government was much rhetoric about cuts in expenditure, while in practice expenditure rose and rose, in every area. I nearly choked last night when I heard her saying on television that the Government's policy on mortgage interest relief represented the destruction of all that she believed in. Her Government cut it. I was therefore relieved to hear my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry) remind the House that, in 1988, Baroness Thatcher's Chancellor removed double mortgage interest relief, which had meant that two people in a property could together get relief on the sum of £60,000. Baroness Thatcher therefore presided over a Government who cut mortgage interest relief.

The results were tremendous, showing just how important a part of purchasing houses mortgage interest relief can be. In the delay before the relief was disallowed, many of the people who are still suffering from negative equity today quickly entered the market.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield said that, in those days, there were no leaks, but that is not my memory of that Government. I think that there was a certain irony in his saying it, as there was a sort of leak that went around—namely, that Baroness Thatcher was rather keen, in those days, on mortgage interest relief and did not want her Chancellor to cut it. She wanted it to be increased. So it was increased from £25,000 to £30,000. It was a pathetic amount. When it was introduced in 1974, £25,000 bought a substantial part of a house, but £25,000 in the Thatcher years, and then £30,000, was a little blip as far as the market was concerned. It was not a significant increase. It withered on the vine, quite frankly. It was kept at £30,000 for year after year and became more and more insignificant, particularly as house prices went up, if I remember correctly.

Mr. Walden: I am sorry to interrupt, but it is significant to point out that, although £30,000 may not have seemed much to us, who, perhaps, have to buy houses in London, the national average for a house was still only about £60,000, and therefore that £30,000—because houses are cheaper in the north—still represented about 50 per cent. of the cost of the average house nationally.

Mr. Martin: I am pleased that my hon. Friend has corrected the apparent drift of what I was saying. I really meant that, by the time of the boom at the end of the 1980s, £25,000 was an insignificant part, and when it was increased to £30,000, it had a more significant effect on the market, and had the deleterious effect that my hon. Friend pointed out in his excellent speech. By the closing year of Baroness Thatcher's Government, it was a far more insignificant part of the total house purchase than it had been when it was increased to £30,000, and it was certainly more insignificant than £25,000 had been in 1974.

If anyone had wished to preserve the policy on mortgage interest relief—which, apparently, on television last night, I heard Baroness Thatcher say by implication that she wished to do—Baroness Thatcher's Government would certainly have put up mortgage interest, not only to £30,000 but probably to something like £60,000 to keep pace. That is really the context in which I meant my remarks. When mortgage interest relief was increased to £30,000, that was a significant sum of money to certain people in certain parts of the country.

Now, interest rates are the most significant factor to consider when purchasing a house. It would be wholly wrong, as my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham said, to provide subsidy to the very people who are getting the best bargains, certainly since the 1950s, on cheap houses, many of which are repossessions, I confess. I do not rule out from blame the way in which, in the late 1980s, the Government fuelled and increased the expectations of people to own their own homes. They did encourage 22-year-old deputy or assistant managers of building societies to lend not one and a half times one's income but up to four times one's income. They also based mortgages on the joint incomes. That fuelled the whole crazy spiral. It had to stop, and it has stopped. First-time buyers are now able to get into the market, and certainly do not require more subsidy to do so.

What I would have said in addition to that was far better said by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham. The illusions to which he referred really gave us a cold shower.

I have another matter to raise—I hope that I do not run so horribly over time that I shall never be called again in this Session, because if I did I would have to sit through even more speeches without catching anybody's eye and would have to make my speech to the Lobby rather than the Chamber—and it concerns elderly people who live in houses that they own outright; the mortgage has been paid off; the husband died some years ago; and there is a small occupational pension.

In my constituency, there are quite a few elderly women with service occupational pensions from their late husband's service years and working life. Those people find that the savings that they had when the husband died are becoming less each year. They own their freehold property, that is true, but the problem is that the roof needs replacing; the chimney causes problems; the house needs repainting. Various parts of the house are beginning to rot. We all know, from owning houses ourselves, that one never sees the end of property maintenance. The bills are high, and now one must pay VAT on those bills, so they are even higher.

An elderly woman cannot keep pace with the cost of the house. Perhaps she has been taught all her life—she came from a family that does this, and her husband made sure of it—not to live off the state, that she must work and save, and that that will see her out for her days. Unfortunately, in her mind, that is not the case as she sees her savings going down and down. Perhaps her husband left £35,000 when he died. Then it is £25,000. Then it is £15,000. She is getting nearer and nearer to £8,000 and then, of course, down to the £3,000. Of course we say to her, "There will be help when you get there. If you need to go into a rest home or nursing home, your house will be taken into consideration. You will not need to rely on the state until the proceeds of the sale of the house have been used."

That does not impress the relatives, who intended to inherit the house, but that is the position. What can we do about it? That is a very real concern to people who are not used to being in that position. The capital limit at the moment is £8,000. We have to increase it. We have to take into account the income from the capital rather than the capital itself. I confess that it is expensive. I have

tabled a written question, which, unfortunately, had not been answered by today, to find out exactly how expensive it will be.

To take into account the income for benefit purposes rather than the capital amount is not as expensive. It is very expensive, no doubt, just to disregard £10,000, £20,000, £30,000, £40,000, or £50,000 of income, but it is cheaper to take the income into account, and it is more reasonable. It would stop the tremendous acceleration in the loss of savings and the feeling of insecurity that comes into the minds of widows, particularly elderly widows, because women live so much longer than men.

I shall leave that as a thought. It is obviously another debate for another time and I need to develop it, but that is an aspect of housing policy that needs to be looked at, particularly because of what happens when people in those circumstances become incapable of looking after themselves, and then we get into the rest home or nursing home angle and what happens to the inheritance of their house.

7.57 pm

Mr. John Denham (Southampton, Itchen): It was very interesting to listen to the hon. Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin), and particularly to his history of the development of the housing market. If I could summarise his speech, I would say that we have seen the problem of rapid over-inflation before in the housing market, created by the mistakes of Government policy. The hon. Gentleman said, quite rightly, that it happened under the previous Conservative Government in the early 1970s, and was good enough to point out that it took a Labour Government to sort out the problems.

Here we are again with problems created by a Conservative Government. The hon. Gentleman failed to draw the logical conclusion, but others will: it will take a Labour Government once again to restore some sanity, security and stability to the housing market.

I agree with the hon. Gentleman and with the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) that we do not and should not aim to see another bout of rapid inflation in house prices. Representing, as I do, a southern constituency, and being particularly interested in the politics of the south and of the southern voter, I recognise the temptation to devise policies that would temporarily stuff the pockets of voters with fivers or create the illusion of capital growth through rapid house price inflation, but, for reasons that have been well stated by Conservative Members, that is not a desirable housing or economic objective.

There are, however, modest objectives that we should set which have not been addressed by the Government. Although we should certainly avoid stimulating an inflationary house price spiral, it is quite reasonable to say that we should aim to remove the fear from the housing market, that we should aim to remove the insecurity that exists in the housing market, and that we should aim to remove the obstacles to the perfectly reasonable aspiration to be able to move house when that is required, whether it is because of a growing family, or for reasons of work, family circumstance or personal choice. That is a real fear and insecurity in the housing market, and a real block on the reasonable aspirations of home owners.

Despite the recent fall in the number of court orders in repossession cases, the bad news in the south-east is that the number rose by 14 per cent. in the first quarter of this year compared with the first quarter of 1994. In my county of Hampshire, it was up by 9 per cent. That strongly suggests—as does the anecdotal evidence of advice agencies and housing organisations—that the fall in the number of repossessions that appeared to be emerging about a year ago has now been reversed, and mortgage lenders are now pursuing property owners.

As has been said, 1,000 people a week are already losing their homes through repossession, and the figures seem to be rising. Those arrears problems will continue in the south-east. Reports from the Department of the Environment and a number of other sources suggest, significantly, that there is now almost a split in the pathway of those who have found themselves in arrears. Most reports suggest that about a third are working their way out of the problem; the downside is that the other two thirds are not reducing their arrears and, in general, show no real signs of being able to escape.

The Department of the Environment report suggested that 200,000 families in that position are now at high risk of losing their homes through repossession. Despite the Prime Minister's promise not so long ago that repossessions had been ended, they are still a very real feature of the housing market, and the fear is great for the families involved.

Many more people are suffering from negative equity. The Woolwich building society believes that, in the south-east, nearly one in five home owners with mortgages now have negative equity. That, however, does not give the complete picture of the problems faced by those with negative equity. The situation is not merely static; they do not simply owe more money than their homes are worth. Their position is a major obstacle to their ability to move.

Moving, of course, does not depend only on the vendor's having equity in the property that he is selling. Costs are associated with it—costs of about £5,000, it is said. The combined number of those with negative equity and those who may owe exactly what their properties are worth but do not have the extra £5,000 to cover the cost of a move amounts, in the south-east, to about 830,000 households, or one in three.

It is not surprising that many voters in the south of England feel deeply betrayed by the Government. Some have suffered repossession; many others have large arrears, and are making no progress in clearing them; many more—one in three—could not move today if they wanted to, because they owe too much on their properties. People are trapped in their homes, and trapped in insecurity.

It is also not surprising that that has been reflected in the stagnation of the housing market. House prices overall in the south-east have moved little in the past year; that is hardly remarkable, if a third of the number of home owners with mortgages cannot even exercise the choice to move.

I want to speak mainly about the home-owning sector, but I intend to respond to the hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry), who is not present now. He talked more widely about the rented sector and the Government's record. I am well aware of the position in Southampton, because, until I became a Member of Parliament, I chaired the housing committee on Southampton city council.

Back in late 1989 and 1990, we made a fairly systematic estimate of the number of rented houses that needed to be produced in the city over the next five to 10

[Mr. John Denham]

years—socially rented houses, that is. We were not too bothered about whether they were let by the local authority or housing associations; that was a secondary issue. We decided that 500 new homes per year were required.

We set about the exercise very seriously. We compiled a big register of all the development land in the city—land owned by the council, land owned by other public bodies, and privately owned land that might involve some leverage because of planning gain, for instance. We put the land into a pool and used it with housing associations. That was what the Government had asked us to do. We also launched an empty property strategy, which has been praised by Ministers and empty homes agencies, and cited as a model. That too was mentioned by the hon. Member for High Peak.

Despite all that, however, the largest number of homes that it has been possible to produce in a year is 250—about half the number needed to make any significant impact on housing waiting lists in Southampton. Not enough resources are going into social housing to provide the homes that are needed for rent.

Ironically, a number of Conservative Members talked loosely of freeing the private rented sector. We know that what the Government have done in that sector over the past few years has stimulated a massive spiral in the housing benefits bill, so that three times as much as four or five years ago is now being spent on housing benefit. Money that could have helped to provide more new social homes to rent is being eaten up each year.

I have nothing against the provision of private sector rented accommodation, but too much of what Conservative Members say assumes that that will be paid for by the taxpayer through housing benefits. That mistaken policy has led to a far less efficient use of resources than spending the money on social housing.

I have described the insecurity of home owners and the immobility in the housing market. Let me underline a point that has been made once or twice, but not in great detail. Insecurity in the housing market does not stand alone; it is not purely a matter of housing policy. It is a symptom, and at times a cause, of a wider insecurity. Home owners in the south face a barrage of problems, not least in the increasing unavailability of better-paid and more secure work. That can lead to initial problems with mortgage arrears and subsequently to repossessions.

Earlier this evening, I learned that the Secretary of State for Employment is going to Southampton tomorrow to launch the unemployment figures. I hope to point out then that, over the past year—despite a fall in the headline unemployment rate—the city has lost hundreds of well-paid, formerly secure jobs in such firms as British Rail Maintenance Ltd., Standard Telephones, the oil refinery at Esso, Pirelli and the privatised utilities; and, of course, many jobs in the construction industry, which is now stagnating.

Our economy is losing well-paid, secure work, and replacing it with badly paid, insecure work. That feeds into housing insecurity, and creates circumstances in which home owners—even if they are paying their bills today—are unsure whether they will be able to pay them in future, can take on new commitments or can move house.

It is against that background that we must assess the Government's present proposals. I do not believe that, at a time when the job market and the housing market are so insecure, further insecurity should be introduced. However one considers the current proposals, they cannot in any way improve the housing market or the position of someone who is in mortgage arrears or who is trapped in negative equity.

The problem of insuring mortgage payments was well covered in a report published by the Association of British Insurers entitled "Risk, Insurance and Welfare". It said some interesting things about the position of people who face unemployment and the difficulties of insuring them. I must make the fair point that that document is not an ABI policy statement but a series of papers that it has commissioned. It is, however, significant that it has published them.

It says:

"It would seem, therefore, that the new realities have done little to change the arithmetic of unemployment insurance. Risk remains highly differentiated, with those most at risk being least able to afford higher premiums. Indeed, in some respects the arithmetic has worsened, for the socially necessary expenditures of the unemployed have increased, while state support has lessened, the availability of permanent well-paid jobs has declined, and the duration of spells of unemployment has lengthened."

That is a fair description of the social context in which the Government are asking people to insure themselves against the inability to pay their mortgage.

That ABI report fairly details the type of exclusions that exist on mortgage insurance policies. They normally exclude the first 30 days of unemployment or financial insolvency, unemployment occurring during the first 90 days of the plan with a new mortgage, unemployment beyond 12 months, people without regular or continuous work for at least 12 months prior to claiming, voluntary unemployment or insolvency, unemployment that is a recurrent, regular or seasonal feature of the job, and unemployment at the end of a fixed-term contract. All those are standard exclusions from the type of insurance policies that we are discussing. I shall ask a few questions about the confident predictions that the Secretary of State for Social Security made in his speech.

The ABI report says:

"While the financial rationale for these exclusions is self-evident the net result is to exclude many of those whose circumstances result from the trends towards a more flexible labour market: the long term unemployed and those in precarious forms of employment."

The report makes an interesting comment which is important to the debate:

"Moreover, these are the very same people who are not well served by social insurance . . . There is a sense in which private and social insurance is currently competitive rather than complementary. Policies linked to mortgages tend to exclude the first 60 or 90 days of unemployment which coincides with the period when mortgage interest does not attract assistance from Income Support. Moreover, with the introduction of Job Seekers Allowance, which lasts for only six months, more people will find themselves excluded from Income Support on account of their private insurance. As a consequence of this trap some families will stand to gain little or no financial benefit from their private insurance premiums."

That point could be developed at much greater length, but it is interesting because it highlights a fact that the Secretary of State mentioned earlier. There are problems with the scope of cover in the state insurance—we can call it that—which is available to home owners. His

proposals do nothing to resolve those problems. They simply exacerbate them and expose people to greater cost and greater insecurity.

It is worth putting on the record some of the real costs that are involved in the Government's proposals. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. Burden) for the calculation of these figures. He has considered the effect of the Budget announcements, which are really the subject of the debate, on people who do not have insurance against the inability to pay their mortgage. He points out that, without an insurance policy, if the average existing borrower is made redundant after October 1995, he stands to lose £590 as a direct result of the proposals. Without insurance, the average new borrower who is made redundant after October 1995 stands to lose £2,063 as a direct result of the 1994 Budget. It is worth putting those figures on the record, because they show just how much the Budget is taking from home owners.

The Secretary of State believes that the insurance market will cope with that problem. He may come to regret the confidence with which he said that private insurers will cover the housing market in an adequate manner. He seemed sure about that this afternoon, but a number of questions need to be asked.

For a start, the right hon. Gentleman was entirely dismissive of the evidence produced by the Department of the Environment's report on the difficulties of claiming on mortgage protection. He was entirely dismissive of the experience of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, which has detailed many cases in which it is impossible to claim on mortgage protection policies. That is an important point.

This part of the debate is not about whether people can get someone to sell them an insurance policy; it is about whether the insurance policy is any good when one has paid one's premiums to it over a period of years. The Government have been and are now especially wrong to resist the pressure to regulate the sale of such policies in a statutory manner. They have learnt nothing from their experience with the promotion of personal pensions, which were not properly regulated and all sorts of errors arose as a result.

The income protection and mortgage protection market is not regulated in a statutory manner. There is clear evidence that mis-selling, misunderstandings in selling and unreasonable objections to claims are arising, yet the Government still resist pressure to introduce statutory regulation.

If the Government go ahead with these measures, they will pay a high price when people pay out on policies and find that they are unable to claim on them when they need them.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: I am listening to the hon. Gentleman's argument, to which I am not unsympathetic, but how would the Government regulate the industry in the granting of mortgage protection insurance policies? Does he not agree that, if the insurance industry accepts that that is the way in which the Government will go, it will devise policies that are reliable? Clearly, the building societies will be interested, and they will want to be paid in the event of a mortgage holder becoming unemployed or long-term sick.

Mr. Denham: That intervention reminds me that I should have declared an interest at the outset. I receive a contribution towards my office costs from the National Union of Insurance Workers.

I have got to the relevant part of my speech. I ask the hon. Gentleman to bear with me, as I should like to cover some of the consequences in a moment. I think that he is suggesting that there will be pressure from mortgage lenders to ensure that policies can be claimed on. One would have expected that to be the case already to a degree, given that building societies lose out, sometimes on policies that they themselves have sold.

The Secretary of State has said that many of the policies that people cannot claim on have been sold by building societies, yet, until now, there does not seem to have been any effective pressure from building societies to make those policies worth while. Perhaps the building societies have been keener to pick up the commission on selling the policy than to ensure that policies work.

Generally, rather than relying, for example, on voluntary codes of conduct in the industry, it would be an advantage for codes of conduct to be given a statutory basis so that sanctions can be taken against companies that sell policies that do not work.

Earlier this afternoon, I thought that the Secretary of State was discovering things that had never previously been discovered about the insurance industry, especially that it is in the business of giving free lunches. I must be cautious about this, as, having made one or two speeches about the industry, I have found that it queues up to offer hon. Members free lunches. I suspect that the truth is that someone pays for those lunches, and that that will be the case in the free schemes that the right hon. Gentleman mentioned.

I have a series of questions about the Secretary of State's proposals. First, if the block insurance policies are so good, why have mortgage lenders been so opposed to his proposals? Indeed, why have they not promoted them to the 70 per cent. of borrowers who he says are not covered by such insurance? One would have thought that, in their own interests, it would have been worth the lenders' while to promote such policies, but they have not done so.

Secondly, further to the intervention by the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), will lenders be pressurised to restrict the people who are able to borrow if block policies are introduced? There are plenty of types of block insurance around—company sickness or whatever—but they are not generally available to everyone. I suspect that insurers will put pressure on lenders to exclude various people from mortgages because they will not be covered by the block insurance policies. I want an assurance from the Secretary of State that that will not happen.

Thirdly, will people be any better able to claim on such policies than they are at present? Is the Secretary of State clear that there is no question of people being excluded because of existing health risks or business failure, or because it is alleged, after events, that they could have predicted redundancy?

What will happen? Will the building societies be in the front line of assessing people's risks to a greater depth than at present, or will there be rows after the event about whose fault it was that the person was unable to continue

[Mr. Denham]

to pay the mortgage? Where will the responsibility lie if the insurance company refuses to pay up on the claim—with the borrower, the lender or the insurer?

I hope that I am wrong, but the Government will push ahead with this policy, and I think that the Secretary of State was over-confident this afternoon. The negotiation of block insurance by lenders with insurers and the extension of the market will not remove the exclusions and the vulnerability that are inherent in this market. At the moment, the housing market does not need the greater insecurity that the measures will produce, and they should be withdrawn.

8.22 pm

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): I will keep my comments shorter than planned and press on as fast as possible as other hon. Members want to speak. This has been an interesting debate because it has done much to demonstrate some of the clear differences between the two sides of the House. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate he will demonstrate that, so far, we have heard no policies from the Opposition Front Bench tonight. It is their debate, but amazingly no policy seems to be coming out. Perhaps that is part of new Labour: the idea is to talk a lot, but not to give much away. That is fair criticism and I hope that my hon. Friend will point it out.

We have had a particularly good debate, especially on some of the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), who touched on an important point. Even though the record of Conservative Governments during the 1980s was impressive, both in terms of the number of people who got themselves into the housing market and in the way in which lettings increased, we now find ourselves at a critical point. We must examine what we have achieved and whether we should now be doing something else.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham went into the matter and said that, essentially, the policy of the 1980s was wrong. I disagree. He was being far too simplistic and failed to recognise that many people who prior to the 1980s would never have dreamed of being able to own their own homes have managed to achieve that. They have some essential capital for their old age or their family and they have got on to the ladder of the capital-owning democracy: I prefer to see it as such, rather than as the property-owning democracy. We must accept that, in future, assets must have greater convertibility so that people can deploy them. After all, a home is an asset. People should be able to deploy their assets against their old age and, for example, provision in care homes. Many people who would never have been in such a position are in that position now, which is a positive factor.

There is a problem, however. After the housing boom of the late 1980s and the recession, too many people are locked into a depressing state of negative equity, with their properties not worth what they paid for them. That problem has been compounded by the fact that we have other instabilities in the marketplace—not merely higher unemployment, which we have been getting down, but more particularly because there has been a cultural change in the way in which people work. White collar workers now face greater instability than ever before, mostly because the nature of their employment has changed dramatically.

When I first started work in a private company, after leaving the Army, there were people who had worked for the company since they had left school at 16 or 17 and who were close to retirement. They had worked for one company right the way through and there were a number of them. By the time I left, I remember thinking that it was difficult to find such people. Most people seemed to be shifting in and out of employment and moving to different companies with greater regularity. That has meant that people to whom such stability gave some confidence about purchases, not least house purchases, have found themselves lacking that sense of stability and unsure where they might be.

On top of that, with low inflation there are lower pay rises. Everyone will say that, logically, there is no difference between a pay rise of 3 per cent. with low inflation and a pay rise of 10 per cent. when inflation is running at 7 per cent., but people saw that extra in their pay packet and somehow felt better. They do not feel that now. That is a state of mind which exists with permanently lower levels of inflation and we have to work through that. It all means greater instability. People are less determined to spend their money.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham is wrong in his assertion that the policy was wrong. He compared our position with that in other countries. Most interestingly, he seemed to allude to the fact that the United States has a much better rental market because it had not entered the house purchasing programme. Yet the percentage of home owners in the United States is roughly the same as here. The difference is that the Americans have easier access to a rental market which does not penalise the private sector owner who wants to rent out property. One can move 2,500 miles across America at the drop of a hat and rent not just a home but all the furniture in it at easy rates. The difference is that Americans will leave their houses behind and rent them out; they will move to rent somewhere else. There is greater freedom.

If I have one criticism of any Government who have been in power, it is that we have ignored for too long the impact of having a constricted private rented sector, as my hon. Friend the Member for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin) said. We have not done enough to sort that problem out and that is where the dilemma lies. The problem is not that too many people own their homes, as my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham said, but that when they want to move it is difficult to find temporary accommodation elsewhere, which locks up their ability to take jobs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham went on to compare the situation here with France and Germany, which I found intriguing. Some of my family live in Italy and have had to buy homes. They have had experience of buying a home over a two-year period—that is the amount of time given to repay the loan. That is a huge, crushing burden on anyone not earning at the highest level. So such people do not get access to capital. We heard earlier that access to capital and cheaper money somehow created a problem. In fact, such access has released many people who would never have had the ability to purchase homes.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham, yes, purchasing a home is special. It is no good pretending that it is just any other sort of investment. People do not live in stocks and shares. People do not bring up a family in a load of paper investments. Bricks and mortar are special. A house is connected with the family, a way of life, tangible things that one can touch which give us security. That is why there is so much emotion on the subject. That is why we find that, with such great instability, people are concerned and wondering what will happen next.

Some have said that Lady Thatcher was wholly wrong to raise the issue of the housing market. I disagree. It is a very important point to raise. I do not think that the route that she is trying to persuade us to take is necessarily absolutely correct, but she is raising the fact that there is major concern about an emotive issue. We need to make certain that we focus on that issue, address that concern and point out to people why our policies will bear much greater fruit than some of the nonsense talked by Labour Members.

Yes, mortgage interest relief at source is withering. It would continue to wither even if we did not change any of the levels because it would become a smaller and smaller part of the purchase. For a long time, I have believed that MIRAS must disappear, simply because it has tended to distort the market place. I accept, however, that since there is great instability, we need to think carefully about the impact of the reduction in MIRAS—not because it financially benefits people to the huge degree that some claim, but because it has a psychological effect: it sends a certain message. That message is compounded by other factors. There is some point in drawing breath, but I am not certain that we shall gain very much by reversing our position.

It is rather pointless to go through some of the other problems, but when I look at what the Government are proposing, I accept wholly that there is a need for reform. There is no question but that mortgage protection has got out of hand and the Government are being bold in addressing it. I do not say that simply because I am a Conservative. Whatever Government were in power would have to address that problem. What is so brilliant about the Opposition is that they will not even begin to address the issue publicly. They talk about controlling public expenditure, but when the first opportunity arises to declare their interest they walk away from it at a rate of knots.

Let us consider, for example, the report of the all-party Select Committee on Social Security, which was published on 8 June. I stress that it was an all-party report. Paragraph 89 of the conclusion says:

"There is no simple or agreed answer to the question at what point does social security become unsupportable . . . The Committee does however agree that the uncontrolled and unplanned growth of social security spending is a cause for concern. Whilst a Government may wish to raise social security spending as a conscious act of policy, no Government should find itself driven inexorably to devoting a higher and higher proportion of GDP to fund the consequences taken by Ministers long departed, who perhaps misjudged demographic trends or the long term effects of their decisions."

That is the crux of the matter that my right hon. and hon. Friends are addressing with the mortgage protection scheme.

If Labour Members do not believe that and want to walk away from it, they should look at what came off the back of that report. Total benefit expenditure rose from £6.6 billion in 1974 to £85.2 billion in 1994-95. Benefit expenditure less costs of unemployment as a percentage of GDP has increased for the past couple of years by around 11 per cent. The Select Committee report makes devastating reading.

Where do Labour Members stand? They do not; they run away. They hold a debate which should not be called a housing debate but a crocodile tears debate. They have seen in the newspapers and heard through the media that there is a problem. The Opposition's job is to get up and pretend that they really care about what concerns people, say a lot of stuff about how they would sort things out in a general sense but for goodness sake avoid going near specifics.

Anybody who consciously thinks that the Labour party will offer them anything by way of extra protection for their homes should forget it. The Labour party has made no particular pledge tonight. Labour Members have talked about lower income owners. The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford) has said that they will look at ways to find money for lower income owners, but the Leader of his party says no, they will have a responsible view towards borrowing and expenditure and they will not allow themselves to get mixed up. Another spending pledge has been made; yet they keep telling the public that they will not go down such a road.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend is developing a very interesting argument, but does he agree that a reduction in the welfare benefits available to cover mortgage interest for those with less than £8,000 in the bank who are made redundant—together with a reduction in MIRAS when the housing market is in the longest and perhaps deepest depression, certainly in my lifetime—is not very satisfactory? With 1.5 million people in negative equity, would it help to bring back the feel-good factor, which my hon. Friend and I know is so essential to this country, certainly if the Conservative party is to go into the next election with some confidence?

Mr. Duncan Smith: I accept what my hon. Friend says. I said earlier quite clearly that I think that the Government need to draw breath and think carefully about the total impact of what we have been doing over the past 12 or 15 months with regard to home owners. We may need to think carefully about MIRAS—not because in the long term we do not think that it has a destabilising effect, but because in the short term we should consider the pressures that people are under. With respect, that is not what the Labour party is saying. The Labour party is pretending that it will have some magic wand to wave to benefit home owners, but it will not. People should be aware that it is perpetrating a fraud.

It is no good pretending that there is a magic wand because there is not. The most important thing that home owners must recognise, as we all must, is that maintaining low interest rates and low inflation is ultimately the best guarantor of security in the housing market and the single most important factor that the Government can deliver. That goes hand in glove with expenditure and borrowing. Reducing expenditure and reducing the social security budget relate to the measure proposed. Reducing expenditure helps to lower inflation and with it interest rates. If we are not honest about that, we shall always be running way from reality. We have to be honest and to explain that that is the only way to achieve security for home owners.

[Mr. Duncan Smith]

The real question is not, as ever, what we should do, but what we should not be doing. Many things that we have been doing and some of the new taxes that we have introduced in the past 15 months have had a destabilising effect. So the message that I send to my right hon. and hon. Friends is that we should start reducing the burden of taxation. Ultimately, that is the best way to ensure that home owners benefit greatly, because they will have more of their own money to spend and they will feel better as a result. As they feel better, the market will stabilise. So let us get on with it and reduce taxes, as a Conservative party should, and stop playing at nonsense schemes with the Opposition.

8.39 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): In any housing debate, we should state the basic premise that every individual in our society has the right to a home of a decent and acceptable standard. The Opposition believe that premise; I am not sure whether every Conservative Member who has spoken believes it. Those who pretend to believe it always make excuses about why it cannot be achieved.

Most of the suggestions made by Conservative Members in this debate would not deal with the major problems that my constituents face. The major problem experienced by people who queue up to see me at my surgeries is that they cannot get a home at all. It is caused by Government restrictions on the ability of local authorities and housing associations to build homes. We have heard that in this financial year local authorities will build a total of 500 homes. That is less than half the total that Sheffield city council alone was building when the Conservative party came to power. The pretence that housing associations are being allowed to build to meet that gap is nonsense. They will build fewer than 20,000 homes in the current year.

When the Government started restricting the building of homes for rent, we were told that investment in the public sector had to be restrained because it displaced investment in the private sector. The building of new homes in the private sector has not increased during the term of this Government and the total product of the Government's policy is to reduce house building from an average of 300,000 in the 1970s to fewer than 200,000 now. That is why so many young and not-so-young couples who come to see me at my surgeries say that, whereas they would have had to wait a year or two years for a semi-detached home in 1979, the waiting time for those properties is now 10 years plus. The hardship of young couples who must live with their parents or parents-in-law in desperate housing circumstances with all the family tensions that those bring is an essential problem, which the Government are incapable not just of solving but of recognising.

It is a problem not just of housing numbers but of housing quality and repair standards, as 1.5 million homes are unfit. When a survey was done of council housing stock in the 1980s, the Government took one look at it and would not allow local authorities to repeat the exercise. Local authorities are willing to invest and maintain their homes but are prevented from doing so by Government restrictions on their ability to borrow and spend their own capital receipts.

I welcome some of the Government's schemes on estate action, in which they have targeted some of the worst housing and invested money in it. But we must remember that the estate action schemes have not merely targeted but top-sliced. In that sense, they have directed money to some of the worst estates but away from many essential maintenance repair programmes, such as the replacement of windows and wiring schemes in other properties, where tenants now suffer as a result.

We therefore have the problems of a lack of houses and a lack of quality of housing, which can both be put down directly to the Government's attitude to housing investment. That is the crux of the problem. During the 1980s, the Government were obsessed with housing tenure and willing to ignore the problems of housing investment. How can Conservative Members criticise Opposition Members for opposing owner-occupation when their policy of the 1980s was an obsession with owner-occupation and an absolute hatred of and opposition to people who wanted to rent their home, and opposition to rented housing as such? Their obsession with one form of tenure over another explains many of the problems of housing policy during the 1980s.

It is no surprise to find that this country spends 2.9 per cent. of its gross domestic product on housing investment, whereas Germany spends 6.1 per cent. Of all the countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Britain comes 21st out of 22 in terms of the amount of GDP invested in housing. That is a direct result of Government policy.

During the 1980s, people on the margins of being able to afford to buy their own homes were encourage into home ownership. They then suffered when house prices went up because they could not afford them. They certainly could not afford to move on into a larger home. They suffered from the rise in mortgage repayments, which they could not afford either. They also suffered when they became unemployed.

I was interested in the comments of the hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) about the difference between investing in a home and investing in other forms of assets. The Government encouraged people to believe that home ownership was a way of making money. It was not simply about putting a roof over one's head; it was an investment to make money—a one-way bet. People were told that they were on to a good thing and that, if they continued to rent their homes, they would lose that opportunity.

The Government not only encouraged that approach but tipped the level playing field so that people could not invest in rented homes but could invest in owner-occupied housing. They gave incentives to buy. They kept MIRAS for a long time while they cut grants to local authorities on rented housing. They tipped the playing field so that people naturally chose to buy, even if they would have been better off renting. All the incentives were in that direction.

Mr. Gary Streeter (Plymouth, Sutton): The hon. Gentleman's words would carry much more weight in the House if his record on housing management when he was with Sheffield city council were not so disastrous.

On obsession with tenure, why is it that, even given householders' experiences of the past five years, 80 per cent. of the population still aspire to own their own homes? If that is what people want, why does the hon. Gentleman seek to deny them?

Mr. Betts: I do not try to deny anyone expressing a choice. But tilting the playing field in one direction by withholding from people who rent the same Government financial benefits as are available to owner-occupiers is unfair and discriminatory against people who want to rent or have no alternative but to rent. It also encourages into owner-occupation some people who wish that the Government had not pushed them in that direction because of the problems that the Government have subsequently allowed and caused them to get into. The Government have created an atmosphere whereby people feel that they have become a social failure and have not achieved if they do not own their own home. That has been a disastrous policy for the Government to pursue and it was just articulated effectively by the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter).

The Government's only policy has been to persuade people to become owner-occupiers. The rest of what has happened has been a series of accidents which have affected people's housing circumstances. Many people in the private sector now have negative equity. The grave problems that people are now experiencing were created by the Lawson boom and the bust that followed, and the housing sector has been hit worse than most as a result. The fact that the Government now want to withdraw income support for owner-occupiers has little to do with housing and more to do with their desire to cut the social security budget, probably to create room for tax cuts before the next general election. The product of rising unemployment forced the social security budget up in the first place.

If the Government's proposals on housing benefit restrictions are necessary, it is because the Government deliberately forced up rents in the housing association and local authority sector and caused housing benefit expenditure to increase. We shall no doubt shortly hear proposals on homelessness, which the Government regard as another cause of the problems rather than the fact that their policy caused homelessness in the first place.

A series of major problems in the housing market have been worsened by the effects of the Government's short-term action. I caution that we should not look for short-term solutions to deal with the problems immediately facing us. First, we should try to deal with the problem of lack of investment. The policy advocated by the Labour party of allowing local authorities to spend their capital receipts on a phased basis is absolutely right. Sheffield city council has £40 million and many other councils have similar proportionate sums which they could use to deal with the lack of housing and the need to build new homes and repair existing housing in both the public and private sectors.

Conservative Members always ask about the effect of that measure on the public sector borrowing requirement. They are ignoring the fact that the PSBR is a uniquely British concept which would not apply in terms of Government deficit definitions in other European Union countries. They are also ignoring the fact that when the right-to-buy scheme started, the then Secretary of State for the Environment gave a commitment that local authorities could use the total proceeds of council house sales towards investment. The same rules of definition applied when the Secretary of State—now the President of the Board of Trade—gave his commitment on that occasion. Those definition problems should have been addressed by the Government at the beginning of their right-to-buy policy and before they made the commitment that money should be spent.

I certainly do not believe that all that money should be used for council housing. We ought to use some of the money to deal with the great backlog of mandatory improvement grants. It is a scandal that people in the worst accommodation—including home owners and people in private rented accommodation—cannot get their homes improved because the resources do not exist to allow that work to be carried out.

Mr. Streeter *rose—*

Mr. Betts: I shall not give way at this stage. I have taken one intervention, and there is a shortage of time.

Conservative Members lecture the Opposition on our attitudes towards owner-occupation. They should remember the scandal in 1983 when improvement grants were allowed to let rip and virtually anyone who got in the queue could get such a grant. That helped the Government win the 1983 general election. What has happened subsequently with regard to the improvement of properties in the private sector shows that the Government are not concerned about helping owner-occupiers, particularly those in the worst properties. The queue for mandatory grants which now exists cannot be met, and that is a deliberate product of the Government's policy.

The successful schemes that local authorities pioneered—which began in Birmingham—included an attempt to tackle the worst of the private sector problems on an area basis through a scheme called enveloping. The Government legislated against that in the Housing Act 1988, and prevented local authorities from tackling the problem constructively and productively. Every time local authorities have come up with schemes to deal with the worst housing, the Government have sought to legislate against them and reduce their effectiveness and availability.

I accept that the relaxation of capital receipts rule is not sufficient of itself, and we must look at the attitude towards housing investment generally in the public sector. The issues can be solved within a ring-fenced public sector housing Act. We ought to be looking at the issue of leasing. I was pleased that, in Sheffield, we put central heating in thousands of homes through leasing arrangements in council homes. That was a correct measure, but the 1988 Act again prevented local authorities from entering into those very schemes. We built 2,500 homes in Sheffield on a partnership basis, but the Government legislated to stop other local authorities from following suit. The Government have legislated to stop all the initiatives for local authority partnership schemes and other means of improving people's homes.

I would like to address the issue of MIRAS and the proposals which have been suggested, given the state of the owner-occupied sector at present. It will probably not come as a surprise to Conservative Members that when I chaired AMA Housing in the 1980s, I supported the phasing out of MIRAS and the use of that money for a benefit scheme for owner-occupiers who became unemployed or were on low incomes. I supported that scheme along with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, and following a survey carried out by the National Federation of Housing Associations. The present

[Mr. Betts]

President of the Board of Trade was also advocating such a scheme at the time. He was then a Government Back Bencher, and was desirous of new policy initiatives.

I find it strange that Conservative Members who talk about their opposition to the general provision of benefits and their support for the targeting of benefits do not address the same criteria to the use of tax reliefs. They favour reliefs that benefit everyone but not reliefs that are targeted.

The only effect of MIRAS in terms of targeting is that historically the biggest reliefs have gone to the people with the biggest mortgages, the biggest homes and the biggest incomes. I agree with the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), who said that MIRAS had over time increased house prices. It has not benefited anybody, but it has pushed prices up. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that.

I accept the phasing out of MIRAS over a period—that is my personal point of view. It is typical that when the Government started to address that issue, they got the timing totally wrong. If they had started to reduce MIRAS at the end of the 1980s by taking it down to 20 per cent. or 15 per cent., they could have done something to cushion the rise in house prices. They could also have started a scheme of benefit support for those people who lost their jobs as the Lawson boom became a bust. They could have acted in those two ways to help the housing market. What they did, of course, was to wait until the housing market was in crisis. They then acted at a time of falling housing prices by taking benefit away from owner-occupiers. That was a failure of timing on their part, and they should be ashamed of what they did.

The right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) suggested that we bring in short-term measures to help the housing market by giving additional benefits and tax relief to first-time buyers. I do not think that that is necessarily the right way to go. The hon. Member for Buckingham asked one or two clear questions which I would like answered before I would be prepared to accept any such scheme.

There is a worry that if we give help in that form to first-time buyers, there is the effect of pushing house prices up generally. Everyone will have to pay more, including those who are not getting the benefits. If a scheme is introduced, will it be time limited? Can it ever be taken off? If help is given to someone buying for the first time, will that help cease when that person goes to buy a second home? Will restrictions on flexibility and mobility in the housing market be placed that otherwise would not exist? Some people remortgage their property and get a cheaper deal. Will the help apply to that second deal? Those are all real problems which need to be addressed.

There are no quick fixes to the problem, which has been created by a set of economic disasters caused by Government policies. There is in this country a housing crisis, and it is a crisis of the Government's making. There has been a collapse in confidence in the owner-occupation sector which has been produced by the Lawson boom and the fear of unemployment. There is a long-term lack of investment in both public sector housing and older private sector housing. The Government's policies are of a short-term nature for reasons other than housing, such as cutting income support and MIRAS to provide the funds for tax cuts at the next general election. That seems to me to be a hopeless and disastrous set of policies.

There is a long-term crisis in this country, and I have not heard one single proposal from the Government Benches in this debate—the Conservatives are, after all, those in power—to address any of the real problems in owner-occupied housing, council housing or housing association houses. I hope that we will hear such a proposal when the Minister winds up, but I very much doubt it.

8.57 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I begin by declaring an interest in that, over the past 23 years, I have been the director and owner of a house-building company, which has just started a new development programme. I am glad to say that I am much more optimistic about the prospects for housing than many of my hon. Friends appear to be, and certainly more optimistic than many Opposition Members are. In the time available to me, I shall elaborate on the reasons why.

I have some sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hendry), who said that it is a bit rich for the Labour party to table a motion defending owner-occupiers as if it were the friend of the private house owner, when its record shows precisely the opposite. Plainly, the Labour party has voted not only against every measure to make the private rented sector more flexible but against council house sales, which have given home ownership opportunities to 1.6 million people, including 3,000 or 4,000 of my constituents.

The most important fact is that the Labour party consists of inveterate spenders who like to put their hands in the pockets of the taxpayers, so it is no surprise that in response to a recent survey of managers who look after institutional instruments in the City, 78 per cent. said that if—God help us all—there were a Labour Government, there would indubitably be higher interest rates. High interest rates and the uncertainty that they cause kill the housing market, whether the private rented market or the owner-occupier market. Sadly, high interest rates are what we almost invariably get under a Labour Government.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden), but, although his speech was interesting, it was rather over-academic in that he did not seem to realise the special place that a house has in somebody's compendium of assets. A house is not simply an asset like shares or a building society account; it happens to be where one lives and where one's children grow up. As a result, people's houses have an important emotional effect on them.

Therefore, Governments have an obligation in that direction, especially if they have—rightly, in my view—encouraged people to own their own houses, as the present Government have done. The Government have an obligation to ensure that people can do that in an environment that is stable in macro-economic terms and not likely to fluctuate wildly and affect the value of their most precious asset.

One could argue that, at the end of the 1980s, the housing market appeared to be a one-way bet. I never thought that that was sustainable, and in 1988 I always urged my colleagues in the building business to get out,

because the boom could not last. I am glad to say that I was proved right, although sadly many others were to be proved wrong.

Nevertheless, the housing market is important, and I make no bones about the fact that it is worrying that some of the statistics are not yet as helpful as we would like them to be. The National House Building Council tells us that starts have dropped year on year and that, in the first five months of this year, they dropped by 15 per cent. Indeed, in the west midlands they dropped by 17 per cent.

The House-Builders Federation says that sales of secondhand houses have dropped by 17 per cent. but that, significantly, sales of new homes have dropped by only 3 per cent. I am told that the number of completed transactions in April was 85,000—considerably less than the comparable figure over the past three years. In fact, it is the lowest total ever recorded for the month of April. So it is not an easy market out there.

However, I must add the caution that we talk not about "the housing market" but about "housing markets". With property, location is everything, so there is a series of discrete markets that are difficult to evaluate. Nevertheless, they are important, and they have an important effect on related industries such as the construction industry, the white goods industry, the furniture industry and the carpet industry, which employs 4,500 people in my constituency. Although carpet export markets are going well, the home market is suffering as a result of our difficulties in the housing market.

What has caused the lack of confidence in the housing market? And—the $64 million question—is it susceptible to measures that a Government, however sympathetic, can take? I am always slightly cynical when people say that we can change sentiment in a particular consumer or commercial market.

We have been given plenty of reasons today. There have been two changes in the MIRAS arrangements, and they cannot have helped. There is also job uncertainty, although one might add that 50 per cent. of people who become unemployed get another job within three months, and that a flexible job market can have advantages as well as disadvantages.

Although we have spent a huge amount of time talking about the income support proposals today, I do not think that they have had much effect on the market so far. They are anticipated, but it is a relatively sophisticated purchaser who allows for them. Moreover, the Halifax building society says that about 40 per cent. of purchasers are already taking out their own mortgage insurance, so that puts the changes in context.

There may, of course, be a change in attitude towards home ownership. Although I suspect that 80 per cent. of people would say in principle, "Yes, I would like to own my own home," it is like saying, "I would like to be virtuous," and the answer, in St. Augustine's terms, is, "When are you going to be virtuous? Is that now?" I suspect that many first-time buyers are delaying making purchases as they would not have done in the 1980s, and that people will rent until they settle down or get married and then purchase, as they have in the past.

In short, we are witnessing a fundamental readjustment of the property market to a non-inflationary era and there are bound to be casualties. It is a huge change and they are evidence of it, although one should not underestimate the problems. Most artificial stimulants can be unpredictable, patchy and, by God, they can be bad for one in the long term. It would probably be a mistake for the Government to try artificially to stimulate the housing market, mainly because Governments do not second-guess markets very well and often provide a stimulus when the market is making an upturn anyway, so that it exacerbates rather than counters the normal cyclical effects.

There are reasons for being reasonably optimistic about the housing market, and we have heard some of them. The ratio of house costs to wages is very good—possibly the best for 20 years. Houses are very affordable. The NHBC said that its first-time buyers index was at its best ever level in the 20 years it has been calculated. There are opportunities for potentially new buyers to buy at a relatively good level.

Finance costs are very low. In the *Estates Gazette* this week, the Hinckley and Rugby building society is offering fixed rate mortgages for one year at the rate of 1.5 per cent. I am not saying that everybody is offering those mortgages, but it shows that the money is available. Since 1990, when interest rates began to fall, it has been easier to finance the average mortgage and costs have reduced by about £130 a month.

The number of households is still increasing; therefore, there is still a demand for houses and, most important of all, real incomes are generally rising. The best predictor of the level of transactions and housing market activity over a 20-year period is the level of real incomes throughout the country. I believe that real incomes, particularly with the prospect—without being definite—of tax reductions later in the year, will rise by about 3 per cent. a year over the next three years. That also bodes well for the housing sector.

Next year, we have a couple of unusual events. I understand that, on the basis of three-year payouts, Lloyd's will have a better year next year, because 1993 was a good one. In addition, building society flotations in the next two years should release an estimated £15 billion to savers, which indirectly is bound to have a good effect on the housing market.

Bearing all those optimistic prognostications in mind, the debate about income support and mortgage relief will be resolved by the market. It is significant that 60 per cent. of building societies surveyed said that they would offer that particular service absolutely free in a highly competitive environment. It is costing the taxpayer a great deal more than it was 10 years ago—about £1 billion against only £50 million then.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Duncan Smith) rightly pointed out, nowadays social security costs take not only an absolute amount but a greater proportional amount of our gross national product than ever before—about 12 per cent. When Beveridge set up the system, it was only 6 per cent. and we were a much poorer country. Some 50 per cent. of families are now getting one of the three main benefits. That was not intended in the original scheme, which is why reform is so important.

I am certain that the private sector will take up the slack comprehensively. Obviously, the Government must maintain a look-out, possibly with the aid of a code of practice, to ensure that pay-outs for income support are as effective as people say that they will be.

We have had, as was said earlier, a series of suggestions from various self-interested groups, including the House-Builders Federation and the Council of Mortgage

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

Lenders, of ways in which we should stimulate to move the market out of its current recession. I believe that most of them are grossly misguided, for the reasons that I have outlined.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies argued that, such was the effect of MIRAS in the 1970s, the scheme gave a tax advantage for a house purchase of about 800 per cent. for top rate taxpayers and 200 per cent. for basic rate taxpayers. That was not sustainable. It was not good for the economy as a whole. That is why it is important that resources are diverted away from the housing sector in the longer term into the more productive sectors, which is part of the reason why the MIRAS sector has been withering on the vine.

I agree with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) the idea of the House-Builders Federation that there should be a first-time buyers' scheme that would offer, on a tapering basis, 25 per cent. relief up to £50,000 is cloud cuckoo land, for three reasons. First, I do not believe that it is lack of finance that prevents first-time buyers from entering the market, for all the reasons that I have given. Secondly, I do not believe that it would have a knock-on effect on the market, because those first-time buyers would be stuck in their first homes, and would lose tax relief on leaving. Thirdly, the scheme would be subject to enormous abuse. I am sure that everyone's wife would be a first-time buyer; she would have the mortgage and we would miss the target with a vengeance. Such a scheme would be a great deal more expensive, and it would be poorly targeted. Too often schemes are counterproductive and short-lived. Trying to change sentiment is generally not a very effective thing for Government to do.

There may be a case, as my hon. Friend the hon. Member for Chingford said, for considering the way in which mortgage interest relief is calculated on an average basis and possibly moving it back a little bit nearer 20 per cent. I would not do that temporarily; I would do it on the basis that we were going to maintain that level. Uncertainty is one of the things that has most worried people in the housing market and, if people get the feeling that mortgage interest relief will be reduced even further than the present rate, that will have a debilitating effect on confidence, and therefore on the housing market, in a way that will be no good to anyone.

I shall mention one or two measures that might have a constructive effect on the housing market without throwing an enormous amount of taxpayers' money at it—supply-side measures, which would make the market work more effectively, and which would stimulate demand, which would then be supplied in the usual way.

I have always considered it anomalous that, although the housing market is not subject to VAT in the main, stamp duty is imposed on every transaction. We want to encourage mobility. Stamp duty raises relatively little in revenue terms—about £1 billion a year. If the Government seek a supply-side measure, reducing or abolishing stamp duty would not be a bad place to start.

There is a case for introducing more sophisticated savings-related home ownership schemes to encourage saving among young people and first-time buyers, provided such schemes were on a one-off basis rather than on a continuing basis, which would distort the market. The Treasury would give, on a like-for-like basis, an equal amount to the sum saved, up to a certain amount. The schemes would encourage thrift and get young people on the first step of the housing ladder. Possibly more important, they would also ensure that young people did not have to take out a mortgage for as much as 90 per cent. of the value of their property, because they would have more of a deposit to put into their property.

The president of the British Property Federation has suggested that authorised housing investment trusts should be established so that institutions can invest in private rented property more tax efficiently. I think that that would have a good effect on yields in the private sector and would prove helpful to the market. I would also like to see a review of part M of the Building Regulations. I think that we have gone over the top with regard to the importance that we attach to ensuring that every new house meets the needs of disabled people. That raises costs without necessarily benefiting disabled people in the manner intended.

Those suggestions are sensible supply-side measures. However, it is most important that we step back and try not to interfere unduly in the market. The market fundamentals are good. I believe that they will lead to some improvement and that real incomes will rise in the next six to nine months to a year on a sustained basis. Everyone involved in the housing industry wants to have sustainable growth rather than the boom-bust cycles that we have seen in the past. As my hon. Friend the Member for Chingford said, if we can add to that lower taxes on a permanent basis, I believe that we will have the foundation for a sustainable housing recovery.

9.15 pm

Mr. Joe Benton (Bootle): In view of time considerations, I shall curtail my speech and confine my remarks to one subject that has not received proper attention in the debate today, although several hon. Members mentioned it—the rented sector in local authority areas.

I believe in home ownership. I also believe that rental accommodation should be provided for that percentage of the population who, for one reason or another, depend on the rented sector. The Government fail to recognise that fact. Although many issues have been discussed in the debate, the Government have not been forthcoming on that subject.

It is the responsibility of the Government, not of the Opposition, to answer questions raised in debate. Throughout today's debate, Conservative Members have asked constantly about the Labour party's alternative policies. The debate is not about alternatives; the Conservatives are in government and they must find a way of meeting the genuine housing need that I shall describe.

The housing waiting list in my local authority in Bootle in Sefton contains more than 7,000 names. Obviously, more than 7,000 people are affected as families are involved, and the number increases every year. My constituents in Bootle have to wait up to six years for a first offer on a three-bedroom house. In Southport, people have to wait eight years for a house and people in Crosby have to wait six or seven years for a house.

Those people want to know what the Government intend to do for them, recognising that they are not in a position to go anywhere near the private rented market,

let alone contemplate benefiting from the Government's proposed new initiatives. Those people cannot go to the private rented market. Some of them have been waiting for a house ever since they were married. My constituents raise the problem of housing waiting lists at every surgery.

The Government have a duty and a moral responsibility to do something for those people. Tory councillors on Sefton council recognise that there is a problem, but they have no answers. They agree with my colleagues in the Labour party in Sefton. I hope that the Minister will confirm tonight what he proposes to do for those people who lack one of life's basic necessities—put a roof over their head. An illustration of the terrible problem about which I am talking is that, of the 7,000 people on Sefton's housing waiting list, between 1,200 and 1,800 are living in single rooms. That is not just a problem for Sefton council; I suspect that such figures are to be found right across the country.

In the brief time allowed me, I want to put it to the Government that they must give me answers tonight.

9.19 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): The contributions of Conservative Members have consisted of two sorts of ritual. There have been ritual denunciations of Baroness Thatcher. Those hon. Members should take a more philosophical approach and remember Henry V's words about veterans in his speech on St. Crispin's day:

"But he'll remember, with advantages,

What feats he did that day".

She is clearly a veteran by that standard.

The other ritual has involved expressions of philosophical doubt about the MIRAS arrangements. I point out to hon. Members who have developed such philosophical doubts that they went into the general election with this clear promise:

"We will maintain mortgage tax relief."

Everyone should have a decent home, feel secure in it and be able to afford it. That is a basic requirement of civilised living. Without it, people become unhealthy in body and mind; children's education suffers; parents find it hard to hold down a job, and families fall apart. The present housing crisis shows just how far our country falls short of that basic requirement.

Right across the board, the Government have failed, and their housing policies are making matters worse. Whether people are owner-occupiers, tenants or looking for somewhere decent to live, Government policies are hitting them hard, and the situation, far from improving, is going from bad to worse.

For the past 16 years, the Government have starved councils of the resources to build and renovate homes. The Government claimed that housing associations would take over from councils the job of building homes for rent. However, the housing associations never made up the difference and now their budgets have been slashed. As a result, the number of homes built for rent has fallen below 20,000 for the first time in all the 50 years since VE day. Only one home is being built for rent today for every seven built under the last Labour Government.

On top of that, the Government have been deliberately driving rents up at three or four times the rate of inflation. Not content with that, they have turned on owner-occupiers. Far from being encouraged to buy, more and more obstacles are being put in the path of people who are thinking of buying.

Recently, we were treated to the present Prime Minister musing on how the housing crisis has come about. He appears to suffer from memory loss when it comes to housing. First, he claimed to have stopped repossessions. Then he denied that he was involved in authorising the building of large blocks of flats in Lambeth. Now he says that the state of the housing market in the 1980s was the fault of the house buyers. He blames the victims for what he now calls "the rather crazy situation". He never said that at the time. Indeed, he encouraged it. He gloried in what he described as

"creating a culture that encourages risk-taking."

Nobody could deny that he did that.

The present crisis of repossessions, mortgage arrears, negative equity and insecurity springs directly from the house price boom in the 80s. The Government encouraged that boom as part of their irresponsible strategy to win the 1987 election.

The deregulation of financial services led to cut-throat competition between the building societies and the new lenders who moved into the housing market. As a result, lenders new and old abandoned the old, rule-of-thumb limits on lending. People were encouraged, with the support of the Government and the financial establishment, to borrow higher proportions of the value of a house, and higher multiples of their income. The result was sky-high prices.

The last straw was the announcement in the 1988 Budget that the double MIRAS tax relief for couples would be ended, but not straight away. That provoked a frenzy of buying—it was exactly what the Prime Minister called a "crazy situation". However, that crazy situation was the direct result of the Budget produced when he was Chief Secretary to the Treasury, a post which hitherto had been synonymous with fiscal rectitude.

When the boom turned to bust, millions of home buyers were left over-extended. The Government kept on posing as the owner-occupier's friend. In 1992—the year of the tax promises—the Tories went into the election promising to keep mortgage interest tax relief. They have broken that promise; they have reduced MIRAS twice, and there is a threat of more reductions to come. They have also introduced a tax on house insurance, thus punishing the prudent.

As a result of the policies pursued by the Government, who continue to pose as the friend of the owner-occupier, the number of people with mortgages more than 12 months in arrears rose from 5,000 in 1982 to 117,000 last year. That means that there were 21 families in serious arrears last year for every one family in 1982. The number of repossessions rose from 2,900 in 1979 to 49,000 last year. In other words, 16 families had their homes repossessed last year for every one family in 1979.

Nearly 300,000 families have had their homes repossessed in the past five years, and 1,200,000 families have been left with negative equity, a concept for which there was not even a description until the late 1980s. All that is due to a Government who call themselves the owner-occupier's friend.

The Government's latest contribution to undermining the housing market is to deny the income support safety net to new borrowers who lose their jobs or encounter

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

other financial difficulties and to reduce the cover provided to existing borrowers. People are to be forced to take out private insurance cover instead. There has never been a better example of how this Government of know-alls get things wrong.

No one supports the Government's proposal. Mortgage lenders are against it, house builders are against it, and even the Skipton building society is against it. Building materials suppliers are also against it. The Department of the Environment commissioned a report which revealed that mortgage protection policies do not offer adequate unemployment protection, and that two thirds of claims do not succeed. The Secretary of State for Social Security rubbished the Department of the Environment's report, but it is up to Ministers to sort out these things between them.

The citizens advice bureaux said much the same thing. Even the Association of British Insurers acknowledged that universal protection against unemployment can be achieved only by pooling risk. Pooling risk is anathema to insurers. Cherry-picking the best risks is what insurers do, which is why they employ actuaries.

At various times, Ministers have said that satisfactory insurance cover might be better obtained from insurers than from lenders, but they appear to have changed their tune since the Prime Minister pulled the Skipton building society rabbit out of his conjurer's hat last Thursday. My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) dealt with that admirably in his speech, but the facts are worth repeating.

Perhaps the Prime Minister should be better briefed. When he picked on the splendours of the Skipton building society, he omitted to mention—possibly because he did not know—that in recent years that building society has charged its borrowers more than almost any other building society, that it has literally the highest level of mortgage arrears of any building society, and that, in the famous "crazy situation" of the late 1980s, it invested substantially in commercial property and lost a fortune, which is no doubt why it is charging its borrowers so much.

The fact is that potential borrowers do not know what is happening. Some, on the advice of the Secretary of State, are already taking out insurance cover. Others are postponing their decision to buy, and others may be looking to their potential lender to sort things out. Potential borrowers know that they will be expected to sign up for a 25-year mortgage, but will be able to get insurance only one year at a time. People who change their jobs will not know whether their cover is still valid. Everyone will be subject to cherry-picking by lenders and insurers alike, and the people most at risk of losing their jobs will find it hardest to get cover.

The situation will be patchy, unpredictable and uncertain. Borrowers face exactly what they do not want: further uncertainty, insecurity and risk. In short, it is a mess, and a mess of the Government's making—ill thought out, ill prepared, badly executed, flying in the face of the advice and experience of people who know what they are talking about. It is a typical product of the party that gave the country the poll tax and the Child Support Agency. It is likely to prove costly to borrowers, costing as much as an average £250 a year.

It is not just cost that is the problem, however. It is the added uncertainty that this proposal has introduced into an already shaky housing market. The party that promised to look after owner-occupiers has gone back on its word. Worse, people who took the Government's advice last time are being left in the lurch. People who are the victims of the Government's policies have been blamed for the Government's failures, and the situation continues to go from bad to worse.

The problem is that no one can believe a word the Government say. Governments who promise tax cuts during a general election and introduce tax increases immediately afterwards are capable of anything. Governments who introduce a tax on household insurance can increase the rate of that tax whenever it suits them. Governments who take away income support from new borrowers can just as easily come back and take it away from existing borrowers. Governments who take away the safety net for nine months can easily come back and take it away for 18 months or two years.

People will rightly be wary of any action that the Government take which they claim will improve the situation in the run-up to the next general election. The people of this country will not forget the lies and broken promises of the last election. But I tell Conservative Members: as the next election looms, the Government will find that the words of Scott come back to haunt them—not just Sir Richard Scott, of the report, but Sir Walter Scott:

"O what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!"

It is that deception at the last election that makes people unable to believe a word that the Government say.

The insecurity in the housing market, however, springs from causes much deeper than the people's distrust of Government promises. The growing insecurity in employment is the main source of insecurity in the housing market. Buying a house is the biggest transaction in which most people ever get involved. Most people are prudent; they do not like to borrow if they are fearful that they will not be able to pay off their debt. They do not like taking risks. In the past, people were confident that the value of their house would rise. Even more importantly, they felt confident that they would have a job. That no longer applies.

Some of this job insecurity is the fault of the Government. After all, their ranks include a Secretary of State for Employment who clearly believes that job insecurity, short-term contracts and part-time working are a good thing—he is in favour of them. But much of the increase in job insecurity is the product of technological and organisational changes which cannot be avoided in our rapidly changing world.

Half the working population of Britain have changed their jobs in the past five years. That change in the market inevitably means a change in the housing market. If owner-occupation is to continue to flourish, the lenders will have to come up with more flexible mortgage packages which allow for repayments that vary over time in line with families incomes. Some people may decide to opt for renting before they buy; others may want to change from mortgage to rent and then back again, as their circumstances change.

These ways of easing the situation for families who cannot afford a mortgage, however, will not work unless there are more houses for them to rent, whether in the

public sector or the private sector. I suggest that a thoughtful Government would have started dealing with these problems long ago.

Ministers who constantly went around the country telling people that they could no longer expect a job for life should have been the first to recognise the housing consequences of what they were saying. A Government with concern and foresight would have called together all the organisations involved: builders, lenders, councils, housing associations, pressure groups, consumer groups, think tanks, employers, trade unions. A sensible Government would have thrashed out new policies designed to meet the new challenges brought about by technological and social change—

Mr. Lilley *rose*—

Mr. Dobson: I shall certainly give way to the Secretary of State.

Mr. Lilley: Would a sensible Opposition care to tell the House whether they have any policies in that field?

Mr. Dobson: We are talking tonight about the policies of the Government, which are harming the housing market. In case the Secretary of State has not noticed, the only reason why he gets a chauffeur-driven car and an office in Whitehall is that he is in the Cabinet and he has to take responsibility for the decisions that he is taking. We are debating tonight the decisions that they are—

Mr. Lilley *rose*—

Mr. Dobson: I shall give way again.

Mr. Lilley: And the reason why the hon. Gentleman will never find his way into the Cabinet and get a ministerial car is that he has no policies to offer the British people.

Mr. Dobson: I say again that we are not debating the Labour party's policies tonight. It is not Labour's policies that are harming the housing market. It is not Labour's policies that have thrown people into mortgage arrears. It is not Labour's policies that have left 1,200,000 people in negative equity. They are the results of the Government's policies, and we believe that the proposition that they are pushing through will make matters worse.

We believe that a sensible Government would have thrashed out new policies designed to meet the new challenges brought about by technological and social change—policies to give people a real choice of decent, affordable and secure homes. But the Government have done nothing of the sort. They persist in pretending that nothing has changed. As long as they keep up that pretence, they cannot come up with policies that meet the needs of our people as we approach the 21st century.

Instead of seeking to work together in partnership, with Government playing their proper part, the Government have sought to abandon their duties and leave everything to the vagaries of the market. It was the market in the 1980s that got us into this mess in the first place. At this time of insecurity, the Government have added to that insecurity. At a time when families are in difficulty, the Government are adding to those difficulties. They have behaved like Mark Twain's definition of a banker: as

"a fellow who lends you an umbrella when the sun is shining and wants it back the minute it begins to rain."

In response to the changes in the pattern of employment, the Government should promote more choice and flexibility in housing. During the difficult and painful processes of change and adjustment, they should do all they can to protect families from insecurity, debt, repossessions and homelessness. The Government have proved themselves quite incapable of such action. That must await a Labour Government.

But in the meantime, the Government could start to make matters a little better, by abandoning their threat to take away the income support safety net. They could also start to release the takings from the sale of council houses. They should allow councils to invest that money in building and renovating homes for the homeless and for people living in poor conditions. Both those moves would make a start in dealing with the present housing crisis. They would help owner-occupiers, tenants and the homeless. They would provide jobs for building workers and for people in the building supplies industry.

In the long run, what we need are new housing policies, which serve all the people. That is what the Labour party will put to the people at the next general election, and those are the policies that we shall carry through.

9.38 pm

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration (Mr. David Curry): It would be churlish of me not to thank colleagues for all the free publicity that they have given my constituency—and, in particular, the Skipton building society—over the past few days. It may be appropriate for me to declare that I have no interest other than my interest as a constituency Member of Parliament. Indeed, John Goodfellow, the building society's chief executive, has authorised me to say that all those providing the publicity are not doing so on a commission basis. Perhaps, in the age of Lord Nolan, that point is worth making.

I am glad that the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) has been boning up on Skipton, and I shall be pleased to arrange for him to visit. A short while ago Prince Charles visited Skipton, and made some remarks about the headquarters of the building society. They were not complimentary. Following a certain correspondence in the *Craven Herald and Pioneer*, one of the great organs of the north of England, one correspondent wrote a letter that ran simply as follows: "Dear Sir, Thank God Prince Charles did not visit Bingley."

As I have said, I shall happily arrange a visit for the hon. Member for Garscadden—including a trip to Skipton castle, which, despite the depredations of the parliamentary forces, is still in one piece and is inhabited by the Fattorini family, who will doubtless be pleased to show the hon. Gentleman round. I shall also be happy to show him the birthplace of Iain Macleod, one of the town's most distinguished citizens. The hon. Gentleman would enjoy himself—although I suspect that puritanical gloom is so central to his character that he would anticipate enjoying himself with real apprehension.

It would, of course, be best for the hon. Gentleman to meet John Goodfellow, the chief executive of the Skipton building society, who is a Glaswegian. He will, no doubt, recognise instantly that a Scot running a Yorkshire company is unlikely to be overwhelmed by a sense of enthusiasm about giving money away. That is why it is important to look at what the society is planning.

[Mr. David Curry]

The speech of the hon. Member for Garscadden—who said nothing noisily, and occasionally wittily—was interesting not for what he said, but for what he did not say. When my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Brandreth) asked him whether Labour supported the idea of mortgage benefit, the hon. Gentleman did not say, "I am not going to mention that"; he said, "Hang on a minute—I shall come to that. It is a very important point." Indeed, he enjoined my hon. Friend to stay rooted to his seat.

My hon. Friend did so. The rooting was terrific. But the moment never came: the hon. Member for Garscadden said nothing. Like all Labour policies, this one never arrived. The same can be said of the entire Labour contribution to the debate. Here is a party that keeps telling the world that it is ready for government, yet it is not prepared to put a single policy before the British people.

There was another gem. The hon. Member for Greenwich (Mr. Raynsford)—the debate has, in a sense, been "Hamlet" without the prince, so constantly has the hon. Gentleman been mentioned—was alarmed at the accusation that he might inadvertently have revealed a Labour policy: the repeal of the changes in mortgage insurance that forms part of the Opposition motion. So alarmed was he at that suggestion that he might have unveiled a policy that he leapt to the Dispatch Box to say that he had not, in fact, pledged a repeal. He did not tell us whether the Labour party believed in our policy; what he said was, "We do not believe in it, but perhaps the time to act has not yet come."

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Curry: I should be delighted.

Mr. Raynsford: Will the Minister now confirm that I was simply correcting his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, who gave a misleading impression of what I had said at a meeting at which the Minister was also present? The Minister will be able to attest that I did not say what it was claimed that I said.

Mr. Curry: What is interesting is that the hon. Gentleman had an opportunity to say clearly at the Dispatch Box that Labour, if it came to office, would reverse the change. He did not take that opportunity and say, quite simply, "I did not say that." We are still in the dark in regard to what Labour's policies might be.

The hon. Member for Christchurch (Mrs. Maddock) was not quite so reticent. She endorsed the principle of a mortgage benefit scheme—although she did not give the details. She said, "We will do nothing for the moment." That is a war cry to stir the blood. It is the old Gladstonian certainty of the Liberal party, still alive and kicking. That is Lloyd George's radicalism. On this crucial issue, the Liberal Democrats will go to the election saying, "For the moment, we will do nothing." Of course it is just as well that the hon. Lady does nothing because, if the Opposition parties were really tempted to bring into welfare benefit a whole new category of people when opinion in the House and elsewhere is disputing, contesting and concerned about the number of people dependent on means-tested benefits, that would be a deeply retrograde step. It would be a foolish and costly policy.

The hon. Member for Garscadden has returned to the Chamber. I have invited him to Skipton building society, which featured so commonly in his speech. He will read in *Hansard* of the generosity of my invitation and all the entertainments that I propose to arrange for him. I know that he will come. What the Skipton building society is offering, however, is what is important.

Let us consider the categories that would not be covered by the offer—I say this having spoken at some length to Mr. Goodfellow just a few days ago. The exclusions involve fewer than 2,000 of the 55,000 borrowers. That means that the overwhelming number of people who have their mortgage with the building society would be covered by the policies.

The exclusions would be the over-65s, those receiving state pensions, the unemployed, those receiving benefits, and those more than three months in arrears. It is natural that the society should not be able to cover those people, but it is important that the proposal opens the opportunity to sell insurance on accident, sickness and unemployment. At present, only a minority of people take such cover.

The Skipton building society proposal will cover far more than the state scheme, under which, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, only 30 per cent. of people are covered: the unemployed and those who have no working spouse and no capital, for example. Most people would be much better served by a developed insurance market. A developed insurance market comes into being by it being given the opportunity and challenged to meet that task. That is how the market works. I am confident that other building societies will follow the Skipton building society example.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Sir N. Fowler) spoke at some length about home ownership. I endorse a great deal of what he said. He said that it was important to reaffirm the commitment to home ownership and to recognise that home ownership, within the context of a vigorous and varied housing sector, had a particular role to play.

Houses are more affordable than they have been for years. The loan repayment:income ratio is probably the most favourable for about 30 years. As my right hon. Friend said, confidence is lacking, but let us not forget the facts: 230 households a day in Britain are still being helped into home ownership through the various schemes supported by the Government; 1.5 million council and housing association tenants have bought their own homes; 100,000 under-25s a year have moved into home ownership for the first time; and, last year, there were nearly 500,000 first-time buyers.

Of course, there are problems of repossession and mortgage arrears. No one pretends that that is not a serious problem and no one wishes to sweep those people's concerns under the mat, but they are still outnumbered by those coming into home ownership week on week and at a time when the recession has bitten severely.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden) said, speaking from his experience of the sector, the key to all this is sound economic management and low interest rates. However important mortgage interest relief at source might be, that benefit is small compared with the benefit of sustained low interest rates. That is what gets people into the business of sustained home ownership. We are concerned not to go back to the situation that obtained in the late 1980s. It is a matter of

consensus that we do not want that volatile situation to return. We want home ownership that can be sustained in the context of a housing policy that seeks to cater for people's different needs and different circumstances. That is what the Government are committed to: sustainable home ownership.

In that context, I do not hesitate to say, along with my hon. Friends the Members for Buckingham and for Portsmouth, South (Mr. Martin), that the private rented sector plays a crucial role. It is a matter of record that the conditions that apply to home ownership are of influence in the incentives for, and willingness of, people to invest in the private rented sector.

Mr. Walden: My hon. Friend seems to be trying to have it both ways. He cannot make what I would regard as something of a fetish of home ownership and give home owners tax privileges to buy their houses—in the form of mortgage tax relief, which still exists, albeit at a lower level, and no capital gains tax—while appearing to show equal solicitude for the rented sector. The first disadvantages the second and I am sorry to say, therefore, that what my hon. Friend is saying is completely and utterly illogical.

Mr. Curry: If my hon. Friend looks to some of the continental countries that he cited in his remarks, he will find that they manage to combine incentives for home ownership, which are significantly greater than ours in the United Kingdom—in Holland, for example, the whole cost of a mortgage and of more than one mortgage can be written off against tax—with a much more vigorous private rented sector. I want to move towards the continental model. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah."] Oh yes. In the present climate, I know that I must qualify that remark and I shall do so.

The United Kingdom is characterised by a high level of home ownership and of council, state-subsidised renting. We fall short in the vigour of our commercial market—the private rented sector. Diversification of tenure and a more equal distribution between what is accommodated by the market and what is let by the social sector can only benefit the housing sector. That is why the Government will be introducing proposals to help the private rented sector, which goes with the home ownership sector. The two are not in contradiction and that is what is important about this debate.

The private rented sector is good for labour mobility, choice, responsibility and, as several hon. Friends said, for young people starting their working lives and perhaps their married lives—if that term is still in vogue—who can move on to home ownership when they are ready to assume that responsibility and when they can sustain it. That is why the private rented sector is a complement and a support to the home ownership sector.

I remain totally committed to home ownership, as do the Government, but equally that does not mean that I cannot have a strong and urgent desire to ensure a strong private rented sector. The Labour party did its best to destroy that sector throughout its period in office, through regulation and yet more regulation—the hon. Member for Greenwich is still saying that it would need regulation. The Labour party cannot talk about the private rented sector without talking the most arrant hypocrisy. Labour simply has no record on that sector.

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): Can the Minister name one European country that does not regulate rents in the private sector?

Mr. Curry: Whether rents are regulated in the sector depends on who lives in it, who is paying for it and who is subsidising it. Rents are regulated throughout the social market sector—in local authority homes and throughout housing association properties. It is part of our policy to continue with the social market sector at subsidised rents. It is no purpose of this Government to get rid of that sector because it is an essential part of a complete housing policy.

The Labour party, when it yells and bellows rather than telling us what its policy would be, is hostile to the private rented sector and is not interested in it. The Opposition talk about it, but all they want to do is kill it because they associate it with landlords. Nor are they interested in the home ownership sector. Look at Labour's deeds and its record in office—it has opposed every single measure. It is now supposed to be the friend of the home owner, yet it has spent all its period in opposition trying to deny the right to buy a home under the Government's schemes.

There are other elements in a sensible housing policy, but the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) mentioned very few of them. It is important that we get a social housing sector with below-market rents and a diversification of tenure. One of the problems in this country has been the monolithic tenure on our estates. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) touched on that issue when he talked about estate action and some of the regeneration programmes. It is important that, on the estate and as part of the regeneration, there are people of different backgrounds, different forms of tenure and different activities.

It is equally important that in their allocation policy, local authorities look towards trying to help people who provide diversity on the estate as part of making them self-sustaining. Just as I wish that home ownership should become self-sustaining, I wish that social renting should become self-sustaining, so that communities that we create on the estates can also avoid the spirals into decline of the past and so that a virtuous cycle will be created in communities where there are jobs and a worthwhile future.

Mr. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock): There are five minutes left of this debate. I am waiting to hear the Minister address the problems faced by thousands of his constituents and mine who are in negative equity. How will the Government alleviate the problems created by negative equity, which is also stifling enterprise because people cannot borrow?

Mr. Curry: I have been in the Chamber since 4.30 pm, in a debate on housing on an Opposition Supply day, hoping to hear one scintilla of information about what the Opposition might do if they were in government. There has not been a single hint about Labour party policy. Whenever Labour Members have had the opportunity, even by accident, to explain what their policy might be, they have hastened to deny it. That is what they stand for; a policy of Trappist silence on this matter. It is a con trick

[Mr. Curry]

perpetrated against the electorate of the United Kingdom. I do not resile one little bit from what the Government have done.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras thinks that capital receipts are a crock of gold on which the councils sit, as if it were some Tolkein novel. All that their release does is to replace external borrowing. If that borrowing were not there, council taxes would have to go up. Labour Members talk of phased receipts. We never know what the phases are, how big the amounts are, or how long it will last. It is one of those easy phrases. Nobody ever gets any detail. In fact, like the rest of Labour party policy, it is rhetoric without substance.

Labour has nothing to offer the housing market. The Conservative Government have set the agenda. *[Interruption.]* We have set the agenda on the right to buy.

Mr. Mackinlay: Three minutes.

Mr. Curry: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman can count—even backwards, as he will have to shortly. We have set the agenda on the right to buy and Labour has opposed every measure that the Government have brought forward. The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras is still talking about lowering discount incentives from 70 per cent. because he thinks that that is excessive.

We have sought and brought about the revival of the private rented sector from the state in which Labour left it through its programme of over-regulation. When we ask about controls, we hear that, yes, the Labour party is back to controls. We stand for the diversification of social housing, whereas the Labour party wishes to go back to the old municipal monoliths of the state. Above all, we have delivered sensible and sane economic management, which is bringing low inflation, sustainable growth and belief in the policies. [*Laughter.*] It is all very well for Opposition Members to point to a period when there were mistakes. Was the Labour party telling us about those mistakes? Was the Labour party pointing anything out? Is there anything on the Labour record other than finding out what the Government's interest rates are and cutting them by 1 per cent.? That has been Labour's entire economic policy for year after year.

Labour does not believe in choice. On every occasion, it has voted against choice. Its policies are opportunistic, irresponsible and implausible. The electorate have the right to know what Labour stands for, and what alternative or remedy it would put in place, yet for an answer we hear a deafening silence. Even when Labour Members are given an opportunity to put that right, they remain silent.

Mr. Mackinlay: The Minister has one minute left.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman can clearly read and count, which is an advance on some members of his party.

The Labour party is hostile to choice and deregulation. Its vision is unimaginative. It is municipal and paternalistic and fails to respond to the nation's aspirations. For that reason, I urge the House to reject its motion.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 302.

Division No. 161 **[10.00 pm**

AYES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainsworth, Robert (Cov'try NE)
Allen, Graham
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Austin-Walker, John
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Barron, Kevin
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Boateng, Paul
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Bruce, Malcolm (Gordon)
Burden, Richard
Byers, Stephen
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Menzies (Fife NE)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Carlile, Alexander (Montgomery)
Chidgey, David
Chisholm, Malcolm
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clelland, David
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Connarty, Michael
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Cunningham, Roseanna
Dalis, Cynog
Dalyell, Tam
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge Hl)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Enright, Derek
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Fisher, Mark
Flynn, Paul
Forsythe, Clifford (S Antrim)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galbraith, Sam
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman A
Godsiff, Roger
Golding, Mrs Llin
Gordon, Mildred
Graham, Thomas
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley North)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Roy (Newport E)
Hughes, Simon (Southwark)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Sheff'd, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Barry (Alyn and D'side)
Jones, Ieuan Wyn (Ynys Môn)
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Keen, Alan

Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Kirkwood, Archy
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
McCrea, The Reverend William
Macdonald, Calum
McFall, John
Mackinlay, Andrew
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin
MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David (Shettleston)
Marshall, Jim
Martin, Michael J (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Michie, Mrs Ray (Argyll & Bute)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon Alfred (Wy'nshawe)
Morris, Estelle (B'ham Yardley)
Morris, Rt Hon John (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Murphy, Paul
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)

Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Reid, Dr John
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Salmond, Alex
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, Chris (Is'ton S & F'sbury)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Touhig, Don
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Wallace, James
Walley, Joan
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wise, Audrey
Worthington, Tony
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John Cummings and Mr. Eric Clarke.

NOES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torbay)
Amess, David

Ancram, Michael
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert

Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth (Mole V)
Baker, Nicholas (North Dorset)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Brazier, Julian
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian (Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Peter
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth (Ru'cliff)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Couchman, James
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'hre)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David

Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Fry, Sir Peter
Gale, Roger
Gardiner, Sir George
Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Garnier, Edward
Gill, Christopher
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A (SW Cambs)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Griffiths, Peter (Portsmouth, N)
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hannam, Sir John
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Hawkins, Nick
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heath, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hill, James (Southampton Test)
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes, Robert G (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jack, Michael
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkhope, Timothy
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan

Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lloyd, Rt Hon Sir Peter (Fareham)
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Major, Rt Hon John
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (NW Hants)
Moate, Sir Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moss, Malcolm
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norris, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Paice, James
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pattie, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Porter, David (Waveney)
Portillo, Rt Hon Michael
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Robathan, Andrew
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Colin (Hereford)
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Speed, Sir Keith
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Ian (Esher)
Taylor, John M
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John
Whitney, Ray
Whittingdale, John
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Winterton, Nicholas (Macc'fld)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. David Lightbown and Mr. Sydney Chapman.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 30 (Questions on amendments) and agreed to.*

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House reaffirms its commitment to enabling people to buy their own homes, which four out of five people aspire to do; welcomes the fact that the cost of home ownership relative to incomes is at an historically low level; recognises that the existing system of Income Support Mortgage Interest leaves seven out of ten households without cover for their housing costs when unable to work; welcomes the Government's proposed reforms which will help ensure that new home buyers protect their homes against the risk of unemployment; welcomes the innovation taking place in the lending and insurance markets to provide good quality and affordable cover; rejects proposals to spend even more taxpayers' money by introducing a mortgage benefit scheme that will effectively underwrite private borrowing; and is confident that proper management of this major household expense by comprehensive insurance schemes, backed by lenders and insurers, will contribute significantly to a return of market stability.

STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

Ordered,

That Mr. Quentin Davies, Mr. Iain Duncan Smith, Mr. John Evans, Sir Archibald Hamilton, Sir Terence Higgins, Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, Mr. Robert Maclennan, Mr. John Morris, Mr. Tony Newton, Mr. Stanley Orme and Mrs. Ann Taylor be members of the Select Committee on Standards in Public Life.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

ENVIRONMENT

Ordered,

That Mr. Robert Ainsworth be discharged from the Environment Committee and Jane Kennedy be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Don Dixon, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.]*

Motor Cycling (EU Directives)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Conway.]*

10.16 pm

Mr. Michael Fabricant (Mid-Staffordshire): You will know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, from our discussions from time to time, perhaps on one occasion in an Indian restaurant in Lichfield, that before I became a Member of Parliament I used to spend time motor cycling around Europe braving the uncertain roads of Greece and Turkey. Sadly, my colleagues in the Whips Office take the view that another by-election in Mid-Staffordshire would probably not be a good idea so my Yamaha FJ1200 no longer throbs between my legs in foreign climes.

Nevertheless, I maintain a keen interest in motor cycling, so when the European Commission produced the

"Directive on Certain Characteristics of Two and Three Wheeled Vehicles"

shivers went down my spine.

Since we last discussed the matter in the House, motor cyclists in Britain and in Europe, under the banner of the Federation of European Motorcyclists, have persuaded the European Parliament to disagree with most of the Commission's proposals—a rare achievement indeed.

The European Parliament took a contrasting view from the Commission because it was persuaded by good solid evidence and well-presented argument that many of the proposals were ill-judged.

Tonight I shall outline three areas where the motor cyclists' case has been most persuasive. First, motor cycle sound levels have been debated a number of times. We must always bear it in mind that public perception of excessive noise is invariably due to machines that are already illegal. Had I been allowed to do so, I would have ridden my Yamaha into the Chamber and demonstrated that its gentle purr is far quieter than any ill-maintained high-revving 120 cc bike with only one tenth of my bike's cubic capacity. I took advice to find out whether I would be allowed into the Chamber in my leathers and crash helmet, but I was told that it would not be de rigueur.

The occasional lack of enforcement in this country and virtual non-enforcement in other European Union member states is no justification for bringing levels down even further.

I recognise that enforcement of existing sound level legislation is extremely difficult technically. It simply is not possible to measure the sound of a motor cycle at the side of the road when the background noise is even louder. However, new laws coming into force in Britain next year will simplify that task by controlling the marking of silencers. That will make it a simple matter for a police officer to check whether the silencer is appropriate for the machine or the circumstances.

The push, therefore, to lower the maximum sound level from 82 to 80 dB when 82 is perfectly acceptable to the public, if only it were enforced, is simply not justifiable.

If the Minister and hon. Members are still not convinced of that, I would urge them to accept an invitation from the Motorcycle Action Group to attend one of its motor cycle noise demonstrations. For that is precisely the way in which the European Parliament was convinced: the Federation of European Motorcyclists badgered it into listening. The motor cyclists' most vigorous opponents had their opinions reversed, to the extent that 95 per cent. of Members of the European Parliament voted against the lower levels.

It is not known whether the Commission was aware of that before drafting its directive. However, it is interesting that the motor cyclists nearly met defeat when representatives of the European motor cycle industry, ACEM, stated that the 80 dB limit would be acceptable at a pinch, on the grounds that the noise reduction was technically achievable, albeit at greater cost.

The greatest critics of the EU will be grateful for the ammunition provided by the apparent philosophy that, if something is achievable, it should be compulsory, regardless of whether it is necessary, desirable or detrimental.

ACEM's acceptance of the European Commission's decision was not a unanimous decision of its members. Triumph Motorcycles certainly opposes implementation of the lower sound level, as it will reduce its range considerably or increase its prices even more considerably—hardly the helping hand for industry that I know my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade would want, let alone what my hon. Friend the Minister for Railways and Roads always wants, to provide.

Secondly, I wish to discuss the control of emissions of new motor cycles. Although it would be ideal to reduce emissions as much as possible, a motor cycle has much better green credentials than a car. Even if the exhaust may not be as clean as some cars, it produces a great deal less of it. A bike consumes considerably less petrol and is therefore less of a pollutant. In addition, a motor cycle does not contribute to traffic congestion in the ways that cars do, as anyone who has been in a traffic jam and seen a motor bike roaring past can attest. Having regard to that, the European Parliament proposed a compromise on emissions to minimise price increases to more economical bikes; what good sense that was.

If we divert motor cyclists into cars because of increasing costs in meeting emission levels, the environmental effect will be far worse. If people in poorer parts of the European Union can no longer afford to go to work as their transport becomes illegal—a real prospect for the cheap two-stroke of eastern Europe—we shall have done a great disservice to them and to the British taxpayer, who will have to pick up the tab, as usual, in the shape of still larger contributions to the European cohesion funds.

Finally, I wish to mention the complicated and contentious issue of anti-tampering. However, it is useful to consider the history behind that proposal to appreciate its absurdity fully. Type approval is a well-meaning idea to facilitate standard requirements for vehicles in all member states so that a motor cycle manufacturer can produce for one European market. There are, for example, 15 different types of moped in the Community with different specifications.

Unfortunately, that legislation appears to have been a means to include unregulated, bolt-on regulations, which grow out of all proportion once they fall under the avaricious gaze of the Commission.

In some countries, notably France, 14-year-olds are permitted to ride mopeds without a licence or insurance. Once the joy of riding on two wheels has been experienced, there is a wait of up to four years before motor cyclists can progress to what they would call a real motor cycle. Faced with that frustration, many young Europeans modify their

[Mr. Michael Fabricant]

machines to obtain greater performance. It should be fairly obvious that extracting more power by essentially amateur means from a frame that is designed for a restricted life is not a safe thing to do; nor is it in the spirit of the restriction.

With that in mind, the principle of anti-tampering was born. The idea was to oblige manufacturers to produce their machines in such a way as to make it impossible for owners to attempt to increase power. That is achieved in two ways. First, anti-tampering provides that no parts should be interchangeable between models that might produce an increase in power; and, secondly, an engine must be designed to cease functioning—to auto-destruct—should anyone other than an authorised dealer attempt to tamper with it.

At the same time there is a proposed licence directive which establishes three different categories of motor cycle licence in addition to mopeds, which are called category A. It now gets a little more complicated. Learners must ride bikes of category B, which will be restricted to 125 cc or 11 kW; while those who have passed their tests will be forced to wait two years, during which time they will be subject to a restriction of 25 kW or a power to weight ratio of 160 kW per tonne. That is known as category C. Only after that long wait will riders be permitted to move up to category D, which is the unlimited category, but which some hon. Members may remember started life as the wholly discredited 100 horsepower limit that would have severely damaged Triumph's marketing.

Although the Motor Vehicles Working Group decided in 1992 that anti-tampering restrictions should apply only to mopeds, the Commission has now taken it upon itself to extend those restrictions to all categories, without taking the expert advice that it sought at the beginning. That makes no sense at all. As a result, those who have passed their tests and are experienced riders would not be allowed to service or maintain their own machines. The majority would be constrained because of the irresponsibility of a small minority. That is simply not equitable.

Triumph Motorcycles—one of our booming exporters—has achieved success by using a commonality of parts in manufacturing its machines. Such production methods would simply not be possible under anti-tampering legislation. Applying anti-tampering measures to Triumph could mean the end of a successful company and the end of many jobs.

It is not only manufacturers of motor cycles who will be damaged by the legislation; the thousands of people in this country who make pattern parts—spare parts—will be affected by the measure, too, as there will be no such thing as a part which fits several motor cycle models or even models from different years. Not only will the economy of scale be defeated, but it will become necessary to gain manufacturers' co-operation in order to produce parts in competition with them. Clearly, the end result will be that parts will be made only by the original manufacturers and servicing will be carried out by registered dealers only.

Such monopolies are not conducive to the free market and they go against the original intent of type approval: to provide a single market giving greater choice, not less, at a lower cost to the consumer. The FEM has reached a compromise with the European Parliament to allow category A and B motor cycles to be subject to anti-tampering controls, with the declared intention of protecting home maintenance in later changes to the European directive.

For the economic prosperity and environmental protection of all member states, it makes no sense to attack the motor cycle in that way. It also does not make sense for us to forfeit jobs in the parts industry in this country or at Triumph, which would be devastated by either anti-tampering legislation or the 80 decibel sound limit. The motor cyclists of Europe have fought long and hard to bring about changes in the European Parliament's thinking about the directive. The Motor Cycle Action Group, which is based in Birmingham, has played a key role in that process. In that context, I should like to express my appreciation to Steve Parlour, its parliamentary liaison officer, for his help in preparing me for this debate.

I sincerely hope that the Government will support the sensible changes rather than bow to the pressure of the Commission which, as the unelected gauleiter of Europe, has neither the interests of motor cyclists nor those of the British motor cycle industry at heart.

10.29 pm

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) on securing this timely and important debate and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute briefly to it.

This morning, I was delighted to follow my hon. Friend the Minister for Transport in London, who was supporting national bicycle week, through the gates into New Palace Yard. It is significant that we are finishing the day on two wheels, as it were. It is significant because, although they are perhaps not quite as environmentally friendly as bicycles, motor cycles are relatively environmentally friendly. A motor cycle does very little damage to the environment, takes up little room and contributes only a tiny proportion of the noxious emissions in the atmosphere.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire referred to noise. The key issue is that, while many countries are not enforcing the existing laws, it would be nonsensical to introduce pointless tough new regulations which would make little difference and would be ignored. We have to enforce existing regulations and not seek to achieve the unobtainable.

There is no evidence that the proposed power limits would lead to an improvement in road safety. I am delighted that the Government's stance seems to be winning the day, and I hope that we shall win the argument.

The British motor cycle industry contributes a great deal to employment in this country. The motor cycle provides young people with the mobility of labour which they would not otherwise have. We owe it not only to the industry but to the many people who benefit from the use of a motor cycle to support the industry tonight.

10.31 pm

The Minister for Transport in London (Mr. Steve Norris): Diffident as I am to respond to the debate in the presence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and his distinguished amanuensis, my hon. Friend the Member for Windsor and Maidenhead (Mr. Trend), I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) on securing this important debate and thanking my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) and the hon. Member

for North Cornwall (Mr. Tyler) who, with me, braved London's traffic in support of national cycle week. I fear that the world is not yet ready for me in lycra, but, that apart, it was an extraordinarily enjoyable occasion which I commend to the House.

It may be useful if I place the directives that we are discussing in their proper context. They are there, or will be in due course, to provide for European whole vehicle type-approval for motor cycles, a procedure that is aimed at achieving a single Community-wide market for motor cycle and component manufacturers. Quite a few non-controversial directives have already been adopted. All were the subject of explanatory memorandums by Ministers to the Select Committee on European Legislation and all cleared scrutiny without debate.

The United Kingdom is committed to a policy of harmonising standards for the construction of new vehicles in the Community and, consequently, has not disagreed with the aims of the directives. Type-approval for motor cycles will do no more than bring them into line with long-standing type-approval for other classes of vehicle and the increased cost in obtaining type-approval will be able to be offset by access to a Community-wide market, which is significantly fragmented at present. All in all, type-approval has everything to do with free trade in Europe. We must recognise that, if there is to be a level playing field and unfettered access to EC markets, there will inevitably be some degree of harmonisation. That is what the directives aim to achieve.

Of the directives so far adopted, only one has been controversial. As my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire implied, it involved placing a limit of 74 kW on maximum net engine power. The United Kingdom understood and shared the concern of other member states about irresponsible behaviour and excessive speed by some motor cyclists, but did not believe that the 74 kW power limit was the right answer as the contention that it was high-powered motor cycles that were necessarily the cause of the problem was not substantiated by the evidence.

Mr. Paul Tyler (North Cornwall): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Fabricant) for introducing the debate. Will the Minister concentrate on the role of the European Parliament in looking at these proposals? As the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire fairly said, this may be a story of failure on the part of the Commission, but it would only be fair—the Minister is a very fair man—to congratulate Members of all parties in the Parliament for doing what our Parliament is good at and what, on the whole, the European Parliament has not been so good at, in respect of this directive.

Mr. Norris: Yes, I am happy to acknowledge the contribution of the European Parliament. As I was saying, the UK attempted to delete the power limit from the proposal, and the European Parliament supported us during that debate. When the measure was finally adopted in directive 95/1, all references to the power limit had been deleted. There will, however, be a study, to be undertaken by the Commission in collaboration with member states, into the possibility of a link between power and accidents. We have taken the view that no such link has been substantiated.

After our determined and successful opposition to the power limit, the Government are now content with the measure as adopted.

On the draft multi-purpose type-approval directive, which has not yet completed its legislative passage, there is broad agreement on the need for the directive, in view of the benefits that it can bring to the industry and to users. The proposal contains 12 chapters in all, and covers the remaining items necessary to complete type approval for motor cycles. Nine of these are uncontroversial, but of the three remaining ones, there are chapters on noise, emissions and anti-tampering. Rather than treating them separately, as we expected at the time of the scrutiny debate last November, when I spoke on this matter in the House, it is now proposed to retain them as part of the directive.

I listened to what my hon. Friends said, and I understand and sympathise with their fears about the potential effects of the legislation on the motor cycle industry. Discussions are continuing under the current presidency, and it is hoped that a Council common position will be reached soon, so that we may reach a satisfactory compromise between all sides on these issues, including the European Parliament.

As I explained in the House on 24 November, in our previous debate, the policy of the UK and its partners is to limit noise and emissions from all vehicles as far as practicable in line with technological developments. Many motor cyclists might not agree with that view, but the fact is that motor cycles are not being singled out. Almost all vehicles have been subject to stricter noise and emission limits in recent years, and rightly so.

There has been a progressive tightening of noise limits which has resulted in halving perceived noise from heavy goods vehicles. That means that 10 of today's trucks make the same noise as a single 1978 truck. The noise from an average family saloon has been reduced by between 5 and 6 dB(A), which means that three modern saloons make less noise than one similar 1978 model. Consequently, in supporting the Commission's proposals, we and other member states are not targeting motor cyclists; we are applying an evenhanded policy that reflects the increasing concern on the part of the public about improvements in the environment.

The noise limit proposals contained in the multi-purpose directive originally emerged in a draft directive as far back as 1984, and the Select Committee on the European Communities in another place noted in its report in May 1985 that the main industry association supported the draft directive as

> "a balanced and technically satisfactory means of controlling and reducing the general noise levels produced by motor cycles into the 1990s".

With the exception of lowering the limit by one decibel for medium category machines, the limits remained as originally proposed when they were in incorporated in the 87/56 directive. Even then, the Department of Transport was advised by the industry that although it acknowledged that the targets were difficult, it would be possible to meet the proposed limits, given the necessary time to adapt existing machines or to develop new models.

Triumph and Harley Davidson have lately expressed concern about the 80 dB(A) limit for motor cycles over 175 cc, with the current introduction date set for 1 January 1997. But, by then, the industry will have had at least 10 years' notice of the standards. Indeed, larger motor cycles type-approved to the 80 dB(A) limit are already in production in the Community and on sale in the UK. In the Government's view, to remain competitive, the UK

[Mr. Norris]

industry must keep up with its European and Japanese counterparts, none of which has expressed similar concerns.

With regard to the particular position of Triumph, my European colleagues, rightly or wrongly, would almost inevitably hold to the view that any manufacturer entering the market in 1990 for the first time should comply with the standards already provided for in the legislation and which were adopted in 1987, particularly when a lead time of that magnitude has already been allowed.

As to the proposition that a reduction of 2dB(A), as proposed for larger machines, is not worth while, as we all appreciate, with the introduction of that measure, the total reduction in mandatory limits since 1983 for the largest machines will have been 6dB(A) overall. That is certainly worth while.

We support the Commission's proposals. We think that they are the best compromise between pressing for even tighter limits and the added burdens on industry. The proposals are achievable in the time scale and at economic cost. We also welcome the Commission's decision to undertake a prior review of the technical feasibility of any further noise reduction before making any specific proposals. We do not accept that the case has been made for further reductions beyond those now proposed, and we are pressing the Commission to ensure that its review takes full account of all the relevant technological and environmental factors.

On enforcement, as my hon. Friend the Member for Keighley (Mr. Waller) indicated, measures are in the pipeline to control the acknowledged problems caused by illegal after-market exhausts. Those measures will control the supply of exhausts at point of sale. The regulations were, in fact, put out to consultation earlier this year and have been generally welcomed. I am grateful to all who responded in such a constructive way to our consultation on those regulations.

On emissions, the proposals, if adopted, will be the first mandatory limits on motor cycles and mopeds to be introduced in the United Kingdom. Again, we should be clear about the relative importance of motor cycles in terms of emissions. Hydrocarbon emissions from individual machines can be quite substantial, and the overall level of local pollution from that sector of the vehicle fleet is a growing concern. I shall give just two examples. Cars now leaving the showroom emit less carbon monoxide than any motor cycle over 50 cc, while hydrocarbon emissions from new two-stroke motor cycles over 50 cc are some 17 times greater than those from a new car. Even a new motor cycle of less than 50 cc emits seven times as much hydrocarbons as a new car. Emissions from cars are, of course, estimated to go down by up to 90 per cent. by 1997, and very significant reductions from lorries and buses will also have taken place. So it simply is not right to exclude one category of vehicle from what is, generally, an accepted policy and one which other sectors of industry have had to take on board.

Although the new proposed limits are by no means as stringent as those that have been applied to other vehicles, they are, in the Government's view, fully justified on environmental grounds. We think that they are achievable within the time scale at an economic cost and without detriment to motor cycle performance. The industry has said that it can, either through existing technology or by engine modifications, and, if necessary, simple catalyst technology, meet the targets. It does not envisage the use of far more expensive three-way catalyst technology of the sort that we now see on passenger cars.

As to proposals for future years, we are not entirely convinced that even more stringent exhaust measures can be justified in view of the low number of motor cycles in the UK in relation to other vehicles, so we are opposed to any proposals to tighten the limits in a further stage. None the less, we have had to recognise the concerns of other member states, but have called on the Commission to undertake a full technical feasibility and cost benefit study on the wider European issues before coming forward with yet further proposals that will be mandatory in all member states.

On anti-tampering, our position is quite clear. We entirely accept the proposition that, as far as machines of up to 125 cc are concerned, including mopeds, the provisions on anti-tampering make sense. When the limit is imposed, to ensure that inexperienced drivers are not driving more powerful machines, it is clearly sensible that those machines should not be capable of being uprated to a point where the power is inappropriate to the experience of the rider. However, using entirely those grounds, there is not the same justification for applying anti-tampering limits to larger machines. Indeed, the whole principle does, of course, work against any manufacturer, which, having come into the market, as Triumph did, rather later in the day than some others, has built its machines on a modular basis, where anti-tampering provisions, as currently envisaged, would be counter-productive. We appreciate that point—I am delighted to note that my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire is reassured—and we are keen to ensure that the distinction is retained.

As for the impact on users, the measure will apply solely to machines put into service on or after 1 January 1997. It will not affect machines first used before that date; nor—I stress this, in view of some of the correspondence that I have received—do we anticipate that routine servicing and repairs will be affected. As for in-service checks, as the measure is a construction requirement compliance will be ensured by the type approval authorities before issue of the necessary documentation under the whole vehicle type approval system.

We continue to favour European whole vehicle type approval and a single motor cycle market. We have been successful so far in introducing measures that, by and large, are uncontroversial and acceptable. When, in the case of power, a controversial proposal emerged, we were successful in achieving its deletion from the measure.

I have laid out the arguments that, in our view, support our position on each of the three chapters of the multi-purpose directive that are potentially contentious, and I believe that all of them indicate our support not only for our own motor cycle industry but for the essential regard to be had for environmental and other considerations in this important arena.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fifteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 14 June 1995

The House met at Ten o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Remploy

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Chapman.]*

10.4 am

Mr. John Hutton (Barrow and Furness): I shall begin our short debate on the future of Remploy by making what I hope will be regarded as a non-controversial observation. It is that the Government have a special responsibility towards people with disabilities. One aspect of discharging that responsibility is to ensure the provision of worthwhile employment and training opportunities. Remploy has been an essential element in meeting that responsibility for over 50 years. Indeed, 1995 marks the company's golden jubilee.

Remploy was formed 50 years ago to meet the needs of those disabled during the second world war. Naturally, things have changed considerably since then. The company now employs nearly 9,000 people in over 90 factories spread throughout the United Kingdom. Most of those employees suffer from a disability and would be unlikely to obtain employment if it were not for Remploy, or undertake self-employment. The company is, therefore, a vital bridge to the world at work for people with disabilities. With employment comes independence, a sense of self-worth and esteem.

It should be acknowledged at the beginning of the debate that Remploy has been a huge success story since 1945. Sales, for example, increased last year by nearly 2 per cent. to over £126 million. It is forecast that turnover this year will approach £135 million. Perhaps one of the greatest success stories in recent years has been on the export front, where sales have more than doubled from £4.3 million to nearly £10 million. Remploy's staff deserve a big round of applause from us all, both management and staff.

My immediate concern is more about the future of Remploy. I am less concerned about its past. The best way of proceeding in future and guaranteeing job security for all the workers connected with Remploy is for the Government to demonstrate their full commitment to the work force and the company. I hope that the debate, which is the first about Remploy on the Floor of the House for many years, will help to focus attention on precious jobs and on the important role that the company fulfils in helping to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): Like all right hon. and hon. Members, I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman for initiating the debate. Does he accept that apart from the disability factor, Remploy performs a particularly useful function in areas such as the one which I represent, which are far away from main centres of employment? These are areas where people with disabilities would have no chance of getting a job. The Remploy factory at Penzance does marvellous work. The House is indebted to the hon. Gentleman for introducing the debate.

Mr. Hutton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. I am bound to agree with everything that he said. If we examine the history of Remploy and how its factories were located throughout the United Kingdom, it is clear that the siting of the company's workplaces had as much to do with social considerations as economic ones. We should not lose sight of that when we consider the future of the company.

If the company is to continue to meet the needs of people with disabilities, it must have the fullest possible support from Government. Many people, both within and outside Remploy, believe that that support has not been forthcoming in recent years. I share their concern.

In the short time that is available to us this morning, I shall focus my comments on Remploy in the north-west, and especially on the future of the textile group and the operation of the new interwork scheme. I know that many other hon. Members want to speak, and I am sure that they will raise other issues with the Minister. I am delighted to say that there are many representatives in the Gallery today from the work force of Remploy, and many of them have come down from my constituency. Most of them are members of the GMB. From my constituency, there are members of the Barrow Five branch of the GMB, my own branch.

In the north-west, there are 13 Remploy factories, employing more than 1,000 people with disabilities. Remploy's Barrow factory has 44 employees. Six of the factories in the north-west are in the textiles group, including the factory in my constituency. The major customer of the textiles group is the Ministry of Defence, which accounts for two thirds of the group's work load.

The Government's decision last August to scrap the priority suppliers scheme and to replace it with the special contracts arrangement is causing a major problem, for the textiles group and other parts of Remploy as well. The whole episode surrounding the scrapping of the priority suppliers scheme has demonstrated a degree of incompetence and indifference on the part of the Government towards the employment of people with disabilities. There remains the very strong impression that the Employment Secretary used the new European directive on public procurement as an excuse to scrap the priority suppliers scheme. It was the public outcry, which resulted from the Government's action to scrap the scheme, that forced Ministers to devise a replacement scheme, the so-called "special contracts arrangement".

The new directive on public procurement practices should have included a similar provision to article 25(4) of the original 1977 directive. That would have protected the continued operation of the priority suppliers scheme. Apparently, according to the European Commission, no such request was made by the British Government during the renegotiation of the supplies directive. I believe that, in that respect, the Government handled the negotiations negligently.

The limits that apply to the new preferential arrangements are simply inadequate and will, as a result, exempt many Government contracts from their scope. Most MOD contracts will exceed the limits set by the

[Mr. Hutton]

special contracts arrangement scheme, and Remploy will therefore have no opportunity to match the lowest tender being submitted by other companies that employ able-bodied workers.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I understand the fear that the hon. Gentleman is expressing, but the actualité has been rather different. As he will know, the findings of the Employment Select Committee's report on this issue were that Remploy has won contracts since the introduction of the special contracts scheme, above the threshold, with the Ministry of Defence, and that quite a number of those contracts are very substantial indeed.

Mr. Hutton: I thank the hon. Gentleman for those comments, but I think that he should speak to the people in Remploy, who would give him a different view about what the future holds under the special contracts arrangement scheme. The reality, if I can press him on this point, is slightly different. I believe that the changes will mean that Remploy's textiles business in particular, which is already competing with imports from the far east, will not have priority in bidding for the large contracts that it needs to survive. Business for the textiles division is drying up, and some factories are getting close to the point where they are running out of work.

That is not—I need to make this clear—the result of any peace dividend. The MOD budget, to 1988, amounts to more than £100 million for textile-related business. The bulk of the contracts, however, are now going to the far east, to purchase clothing produced by cheap labour. That affects the job security and employment of severely disabled workers.

Recently, because of the lack of textile contracts, Remploy made a commercial decision to close the Alfreton factory, which, I believe, is in the constituency of the Under-Secretary of State, and the work force was shifted to a new location. I am aware that the work force at Alfreton was offered alternative employment at Mansfield. For able-bodied people, the extra time involved in travelling to work in a new location may be an inconvenience, but for severely disabled people with special needs it can be uncomfortable and distressing.

I believe that the Government's whole handling of the issue has been abysmal. The consequences for Remploy, and the textiles group in particular, could be very serious indeed. The consolidated supplies directive, which has been used as the excuse for scrapping the priority suppliers scheme, could not have been intended to have had that effect on companies such as Remploy, which is fulfilling a social need of employing people with special disabilities. I believe that the case for the Government to rethink their whole strategy in this area is very persuasive.

Before I leave the point about the textiles group and its future in the north-west, I bring to the attention of the Minister an issue that deserves consideration by the Government. If MOD contracts that previously went to Remploy factories in the UK are going to the far east, I would draw the Minister's attention to the work that was done by Remploy at Barrow during the Gulf war, when the Army and the other services desperately needed new and additional equipment: uniforms for the desert, and special biological and protective suits.

During the Gulf crisis, the work force at Barrow worked long overtime hours, throughout the weekends, to produce the equipment that the armed services needed to discharge their responsibilities. If an increasing volume of that business goes to the far east, to countries outside the United Kingdom, there can be no guarantee that such an opportunity for the MOD will be available in times of crisis. The MOD has always said how satisfied it is with the work that comes from Remploy. If we push those contracts abroad to the far east and take them away from Remploy, there is a strategic implication that the Government need to take on board.

I shall now say a few words about the interwork scheme. Concern has been expressed about recent statements made by the company about the size and shape of the Remploy work force and the implementation of the interwork scheme, under which Remploy workers are being encouraged to move out of supported workplaces and into supported placements in open employment. The chief executive of Remploy has said that he hopes to expand the interwork scheme from the present figure of 1,700 to nearly 5,000. He also said, in the company's golden jubilee pamphlet:

"What I see for our future is far fewer products being produced . . . leading to fewer factories and fewer people."

I believe that Remploy workers have genuine concerns about a move to low-skilled jobs with poor training and less security, in inaccessible workplaces. There is some evidence of a failure to observe the basic requirement: an employer under the interwork scheme must not pay less than the Remploy rate for the job. There are also fears that interwork will result in the creaming off of the less disabled, leaving those with the greatest disability in the factories to compete for what contract work becomes available. I believe that that would be totally unacceptable.

It would be helpful if the Minister would provide details to the House today of the type of work being undertaken under the interwork scheme, and the extent of the protections that exist against abuse.

I shall end my remarks now, as other hon. Members want to speak. I shall end on a positive note. Labour Members believe that the case for supported employment for people with disabilities is as strong today as it was in 1945 when Ernie Bevin, as Minister for Labour, set up Remploy.

I hope that the Minister will be able to give a firm promise to support Remploy and its work force into the future and to ensure that it is still able to celebrate many more anniversaries over the next few years.

10.17 am

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) on his success in obtaining the debate. I had a letter on my desk, addressed to you, Madam Speaker, asking for a debate on Remploy, because I believed that there would be strong interest in it on both sides of the House, and that is very evident today.

I am personally aware of the concerns in Barrow. A petition was presented to me when I was in Barrow last summer to carry out an opening ceremony for a new bungalow, at "The Croft", of which the hon. Member will be aware. The new bungalow was called "Peace" and I was delighted to be there. The Barrow and District Spastics and Handicapped Society does excellent work. I

am glad to say that my son is very happily settled there. He did come from Barrow originally, so it is fitting that he should be back there. I cannot speak too highly of the work done by Dennis Rose and the whole team at "The Croft", including his daughter, Jacqui Rose, who gives such personal care to the people there.

I know that the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) visited Barrow a little while ago. I hope that he might have an opportunity to come to Barrow again and to visit "The Croft", as I am sure that he would be delighted to see the excellent work that is done there in view of his own interests in that sphere. Stephen is too physically and mentally handicapped to be able to take advantage of the sort of work that Remploy does, but I am very aware of the importance for Remploy, not only in Barrow but in my own constituency and elsewhere. Although the factory in Bolton is just outside my constituency, it employs many of my constituents. It is also in the textiles group and so shares the concerns that the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness mentioned.

We also have a local authority workshop in Bolton, which carries out work for the Post Office. The Remploy factory in Bolton makes lots of trousers for the Post Office, so the Post Office is an important customer. The Bolmoor workshop has been successful in developing new products, especially the bags—they should also be useful for postmen—that it makes for newspaper groups and others. That workshop employs about 25 people at an average subsidy of £5,600 per head, which is much less than the cost of subsidising employment in Remploy.

I have been interested in the employment of the disabled for many years. When I first entered the House I was on the Employment Select Committee, and I was parliamentary private secretary to the Secretary of State for Employment from 1987 to 1990 and for two other Ministers in the Department of Employment until 1992. So I have long been aware of the concerns.

The problem is that the costs of subsidising employment at Remploy are so high compared with those elsewhere. The figure works out at almost £10,000 per employee; the cost of Remploy's subsidy is higher than its total wages bill, so in strict cash terms it would be cheaper for people to have the money and stay at home—although I appreciate the fact that Remploy carries out many other functions, and that it is important for people with disabilities to have the opportunity to be employed and to be integrated as closely as possible with society as a whole.

There are about 20,000 people in supported employment. Last night a reception was organised in the Palace of Westminster by the Shaw Trust, which has been remarkably successful in placing more than 2,000 people in employment throughout the country. It has existed for only about 10 years, and works with a subsidy of £4,420 per employee, through a Government grant of £8.5 million. So the Shaw Trust is more than twice as effective as Remploy in terms of the number of disabled people whom it can help for the same money. The total Government subsidy for such work is £153 million, of which about £94 million goes to Remploy. We must accept the fact whom resources are limited, and if we want to help as many disabled people as possible we must carefully examine the costs in Remploy.

Remploy has been given targets, but I believe that it has had difficulty in meeting them. It is nice for Remploy, like any other nationalised industry, to sit back and be comfortable with the taxpayer's support, rather than facing the need to consider the picture more widely. One target was for the organisation to increase the number of disabled people employed from 8,600 to 8,900, at an average cost of £9,650. Another was to increase the number of people employed through the interwork scheme from 1,230 to 1,450. I am certainly not aware of a target of 5,000; I believe that that would mean looking a long way ahead.

The average cost of the interwork scheme is £4,420 per employee, and my figures suggest that the target is to increase employment in factories from 7,370 to 7,450. No figure is given for the cost of employment in those factories, so I should be grateful if when he replies the Minister would confirm my calculations, which suggest that each factory job costs £10,668. That figure is two and a half times the cost of the Shaw Trust's placements, so within a given budget five jobs could be organised through the Shaw Trust compared with two through Remploy in the factories. It is important that we know these figures, and that we think about what could be done.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness said that there should be a rethink of Remploy's whole strategy. I agree, and I shall say more about that later. Remploy now has 95 factories in the United Kingdom, although if Alfreton closes there will be only 94.

As is obvious, the organisation is competing in an increasingly global marketplace. So many international businesses now make different products in different places that it is almost impossible to say exactly where anything is made. The other day there was a proposal for a new car factory to be built in south Wales by a conglomerate of Asian car manufacturers using Mercedes-Benz engines. I do not know what we should call the product that comes out of that factory. No doubt the Welsh would like to call it a Welsh car, the Germans will call it a German car and the Asians will call it an Asian car. It is now impossible to locate the manufacture of a product in a country as we once could.

One of the surprising facts about Remploy is that while the Government have been in office we have nationalised the eight private companies that have been brought into Remploy. I do not believe that that was the right strategy, and I should be surprised if we were to continue to nationalise private companies in Remploy, against the trend according to which the Government have privatised so many former nationalised industries, because those industries now run so much better as private sector companies.

I hope that the GMB will adopt a positive attitude towards the future options for Remploy factories. It is important that the factories should be in full use and employ people as fully as possible—not only the disabled but the abled, in as integrated a way as possible.

About 40 per cent. of Remploy's work is dependent on the Government, so it is obvious that the Government are involved not only as the provider of the subsidy but as a major customer. Remploy's failure to meet targets in the past has left the Government with the problem of what to do about that. The business is in a difficult position, with a £126 million turnover and a deficit of £83 million, which, as I have already said, exceeds the £79 million wage bill.

We already know about difficulties in the textiles division. In evidence to the Employment Select Committee's inquiry, it was named as the one of six divisions in which there were immediate problems. I

[Mr. Peter Thurnham]

believe that when Ernie Bevin originally set up Remploy it was viewed as a staging post, but it is not easy to see how it can now perform that function; currently only 0.4 per cent. of employees move on to other employment. Of course, many employees have been with the organisation for years, and would not take easily to the idea of moving on.

We should consider the experience of other countries. Sweden, with the Samhall organisation, employs about 29,000 people; Australia has 11,700 in 282 separate workshops; and the United States has 250,000 disabled people in workshops. There is a strong message that those other countries are seeking alternatives to sheltered workshops, so I agreed with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness when he said that a new strategy was needed. After the Alfreton closure it will be possible to offer the workers alternative employment in the nearby Mansfield factory, but that would not necessarily happen with other factories, so we must consider the alternatives carefully.

We should start by discovering what the wishes of disabled people are. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to carry out an opinion survey among disabled jobseekers in general, as well as among employees of Remploy and other sheltered workshops, to find out exactly what they would like. We have heard some ideas from the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness today, and many of his constituents are in the Strangers Gallery. They can give their views as existing employees, but we should also seek the opinions of as wide a range of people as possible.

For instance, the Shaw Trust has told me that its disabled employees welcome the fact that the way in which they work is integrated with the rest of society. Indeed, the trend is now for disabled people to be integrated as fully as possible into society and to avoid segregated ghettos, which may have been necessary in the 1940s but which no longer represent our vision of the best possibilities now.

We should find out the opinions of the placement, assessment and counselling teams—the PACTs—and the disability employment advisers, so that when we consider new strategies we know more exactly what disabled people need.

It has been suggested to me that Remploy could be transformed into an employee-owned trust. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), the Opposition spokesman on finance and City affairs, spoke at the launch of the new Employee Share Ownership Trust, so there is interest on both sides of the House in considering a possible different structure for Remploy as an employee-owned trust.

However Remploy is owned, I believe that the factories' future must depend on their entering into partnership agreements with private sector organisations that can help with the management. Interesting ideas have been suggested to me by the managing director of the Baxi partnership in Preston, Mr. Bryan Gray, and I have incorporated those thoughts into a paper. I gave a copy to the hon. Member for Monklands, West last night, and showed a copy to my hon. Friend the Minister, and I hope that he will consider the proposals in it.

It is essential that we look to the private sector to help find a solution to the future of Remploy. There is no doubt that the Government are committed to the interests of disabled people and to providing funds to help with employment. A massive subsidy is going into Remploy, but that subsidy should go not just into bricks and mortar to keep open factories that may or may not be fully utilised, but to providing the best and widest opportunities for disabled people so that they can look forward to the future with some confidence.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I do not want to take up more time than I need, but I have read the hon. Gentleman's paper carefully and we shall consider it carefully. I hope that he will not think that I am misleading him, however, if I say that I did not expect his preamble. No one in the Tomlinson committee report accepted that this was just a matter of dealing with problems that arose from the war. Going back even to the American civil war, it was expected that one would deal with war veterans but, thereafter, with people who were still disabled.

Mr. Thurnham: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for pointing that out. Obviously, we must consider the matter in the fullest and widest context and I am grateful for his undertaking to consider the proposals that I have put to him.

Forgive me, Madam Speaker, if I have taken more time than I had intended, but I should like to welcome today's fall in unemployment. The fall in Bolton, to a figure of 8,665, is welcome. We should not forget that, when the Labour party was in power, unemployment in Bolton trebled from 2,102 to 6,521. The figure is now coming down. [HON. MEMBERS: "What is it now?"] The May figure is 8,665 and it is coming down at a rate that suggests to me that it will not be very long before it is below the figure when the Labour party was in power. The figures show that unemployment trebles when Labour party policies are in place. When this Government's policies are being implemented, however, we can look to a fall in unemployment, better employment opportunities for able-bodied people, and much better employment opportunities for disabled people, which I want to see occurring.

10.31 am

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) had the good fortune to secure this debate and congratulate him most warmly on his opening speech. The debate is one I find moving as a parliamentary occasion that affects the hopes and very real fears of thousands of working people, a great many of them severely disabled working people. It is a debate of short duration and I shall speak only briefly, more especially since my support for Remploy's employees over more than 30 years here, both as a Minister and from these Benches, is well documented.

My purpose in speaking is simply to underline the importance of a clear ministerial response today to the questions Remploy's employees and their representatives are asking, often in anguish and sometimes now in anger, about the future of an enterprise that has transformed a huge number of disabled people from tax users into tax payers. They want a clear statement from the Government today that disabled people will not be exploited by interwork, to which my hon. Friend referred in his speech. They insist that the host company should pay at least the Remploy basic rate of £126 a week.

Remploy's disabled employees ask whether the cost of employing non-disabled administrative staff, which was £28 million in the last financial year, has got out of control. They point out that the current pay of the chief executive at £87,600 has increased from £74,000 in 1991 and that this represents four times the percentage increase of hourly-paid disabled employees in the same period. Does that have the Minister's approval?

Disabled employees see the Government's Disability Discrimination Bill as being likely to reduce sheltered employment. What guarantee can the Minister give this House today that there will be no reduction in sheltered employment in the UK? The Government's Bill proposes to abolish the register, but they have not said what they intend to put in its place. They promised to consult about a new system with employers, but not with disabled employees or their unions. Is that not totally unacceptable to both sides of the House and will the Minister now explain what is to be put in place of the green card system?

There is concern as well that the Government are not doing enough to try to alter European law and directives that deal with unfair competition and an insistence that sheltered employment should be exempted from their effect. Does the Minister agree that Government Departments such as the Ministry of Defence should be allowed to place orders with British companies such as Remploy without interference?

In the Golden Jubilee issue of *Remploy News*, under the headline, "My Dream", an article by the chief executive said, quite amazingly, of Britain's political parties:

"They all have the same policy towards disability".

That must really have startled the Secretary of State for Employment.

Remploy's chief executive also foresaw in his article

"fewer Remploy factories and fewer people."

While there are Members of Parliament in all parties who work in close harmony to improve the well-being and enhance the status of disabled people, the chief executive's first statement is plainly wrong as he would discover by spending no more than a day or two here; and the second is deeply worrying to Remploy's employees, not least those who are severely disabled.

This debate provides the opportunity to clear the air about Remploy's future and I ask the Minister to play his part by providing straight answers to the questions I and others want answered before this debate concludes.

Finally, I want to pay well-justified tribute to Phil Davies, trade union side secretary, whose industry and concern have done so much to keep Members of Parliament abreast of developments at Remploy. His commitment and constancy in promoting the interests of its employees are highly valued by those whom Phil and his colleagues work so hard to help and what they have achieved is rightly and widely admired.

10.36 am

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): I also congratulate the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) on instigating today's debate on this important company. I should like to congratulate it on its 50 years of achievement in helping to provide employment opportunities for some of the most severely disabled people in society.

It is easy to forget that the landmark legislation of 1944 was introduced against a background of war, when the country needed to maximise the potential, skills and contribution of all its people to defeat the enemy of Nazism.

When I was in the United States of America with the Select Committee on Employment to consider the Americans With Disabilities Act, one of the things that struck me was the loss of economic activity that resulted from disabled people being physically unable to attend work through lack of access or training, a point that was made repeatedly. The loss amounts to about £1 billion every year. In total, the American economy could lose as much as £100 billion a year from not maximising the skills and potential of disabled people.

We should consider this as an issue not only of social policy, but of Britain and the British economy. We should have the benefit of the talents and contributions of disabled people for our country to flourish economically. Although Remploy is often characterised as a company that provided disabled people with dignity and, in a sense, a land fit for heroes—many of the people who worked for Remploy immediately after the war were heroes—it is in the direct economic interests of our country.

Times have changed since the war and the revolution that has brought us new technology has helped the disabled in two ways. First, it enables those who, for purely physical reasons, were unable to work to do so with the help of modern aids. In America, that process is even more advanced than it is in Britain.

Secondly, the nature of the work that is now available for employees generally is such that people have to climb the ladder of technology. Physical work is, of itself, less important and disabled people can climb that ladder. In terms of technology, therefore, events are moving in favour of disabled people in the work force, and it is right that Remploy should direct itself in a way that meets, and works with, that tide.

When Remploy was first set up, its employees generally manufactured furniture. It is right that it should move on and look at other work—at the work of the future, as the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said—rather than at the work of the past. The Edinburgh factory has been doing exactly that. It started as a furniture manufacturer and moved into packaging, but for the past three years it has been a subcontractor in the electronics industry making quite a wide range of fairly sophisticated electronic products. That business is competing successfully, and in the past year alone the number of employees has gone up from 40 to 63.

I do not entirely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) about the purchase of other businesses. Although my instincts are always in favour of private enterprise, if it is possible to purchase a business in an area of modern business endeavour and help disabled people to use their talents, I would not criticise such a move. Remploy was right to purchase the Silhouette lingerie line and to use that facility. It was right to undertake the making of life jackets, which is a fairly sophisticated process, and right to streamline the operating divisions.

The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe criticised Mr. Withey and the amount that he is paid, but Mr. Withey has done a good deal to make the business more efficient. The interwork scheme is working with the grain of

[Mr. Oliver Heald]

Remploy's original intentions. In a way, it was a staging post to enable people to move into placements in open employment. I am glad to see that that is expanding.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness spoke about the priority suppliers scheme. That scheme had to be abandoned by the Government because the European Commission made it clear that it was illegal. The Labour party is committed to European measures in every direction and says that it will always be at the centre of Europe and never stand up against it in any way, but it is saying that it would go ahead with an illegal scheme. We all know that it would not. The Government moved swiftly, in discussions with the Commission, to introduce a scheme that provides at least some of the protection that had previously been available.

The Select Committee on Employment looked at the issue. Page xv of its report states that the new arrangements enabled Remploy to win contracts, some of them large ones from the Ministry of Defence over the public procurement threshold, and that more were being considered. It would be wrong to say that the new scheme had been a failure. Certainly at this stage it looks as if there are some promising developments.

We must not forget that Remploy has to sell its products. There is increasing competition from suppliers of textiles and clothing sourced from low-wage economies in the far east. There is also a decline in work from the Ministry of Defence. No political party or hon. Member would say that the Ministry of Defence should order more than it needs so as to support Remploy. It is right that it should be a competitive business and become even more competitive. That is the chief executive's approach. He has said:

> "It has meant that we have to be very commercially minded. No one will pay us more or accept lower quality goods or late deliveries just because we are Remploy."

The modern structure and modern products and methods are the way forward.

I support the idea of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East of a partnership with the private sector. There are two reasons for maintaining Remploy. One is the social reason—providing employment and opportunities for disabled people. The other concerns the importance to our economy of using people who have talents and skills and a contribution to make. We should not always concentrate on the social argument—it is important to Britain to get it right.

10.44 am

Mr. David Clelland (Tyne Bridge): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) on taking the opportunity to raise this important issue. I recently visited the Remploy factory in my constituency on the Team Valley trading estate where work is carried out with great skill and commitment. The workers there are concerned about the future of Remploy and especially about the future of the factory and their jobs. We have been able to reassure them about the next three years, but there is a question mark about the situation after that.

Remploy workers have become the victims of the Government's short-termism, as have many other people. The Remploy workers discussed with me two areas of concern, both of which have been mentioned. The first is the special contracts arrangement. I draw the attention of the House to early-day motion 859 which stands in my name and those of 82 of my hon. Friends. It draws attention to the shortcomings of the new arrangements that replaced the priority suppliers scheme. That replacement was one of the first acts of the Secretary of State for Employment, and although the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) drew attention to European rules, it seems to me and to the Remploy workers that the Government's enthusiasm for Europe waxes and wanes according to the issue of the day.

The Secretary of State seemed only too eager to adopt the European rules because of the effect that they would have on the disabled, which is detrimental. It is somewhat ironic that one of the first Remploy factories to suffer after the Secretary of State took up his appointment was the one in Alfreton in the constituency of the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, the hon. Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim), who is to reply to the debate. I wrote to him offering my support for the efforts that I knew he would want to make to ensure that the factory did not close. I got a polite reply, or at least one that was as polite as the hon. Gentleman can be on such occasions, turning down my offer of support, and the factory closed. Perhaps there is a lesson there for the Under-Secretary.

It has been said that the workers can be redeployed to another factory in Mansfield, which is nine miles away. I suppose that is welcome, but it is not necessarily an easy option for disabled people, particularly for those who wish to maintain some independence and make their own travel arrangements. Nine miles can be a long way and the Under-Secretary should have taken more note of that when dealing with the factory in his constituency.

The second issue that the Remploy employees in my constituency raised is the interwork scheme. There is some concern about exploitation—that workers are being given menial tasks under the scheme to the benefit of employers. The Under-Secretary should have looked at that. If he has, I hope that he will give us the results of his inquiries; if he has not, I hope that he will do so because we do not want disabled people being exploited and being unable to use their undoubted skills to their full capacity. I look forward to receiving such assurances from the Minister.

10.48 am

Mr. Peter Hain (Neath): I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) on securing this debate. It will be welcomed in Wales and especially in south Wales which has a higher proportion of disabled workers than anywhere else in Britain. I am proud to be a member of the GMB union. I speak on behalf of several hundred of my constituents who are employed in the Remploy factories in Neath, Ystradgynlais and Brynamman. Those people are highly skilled and proud of their work. Because my communities have a tradition of coal mining and heavy industry, the people there suffer a high ratio of disability. As a result, the Remploy factories are crucial local employers.

I wish to correct the myth, perpetrated to some extent by the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), that the Government are being charitable in supporting Remploy through a £94.2 million subsidy. If the Remploy workers who enjoy that subsidy were on the

dole, it would cost the Exchequer more than £81 million, so it is not a generous charitable subsidy: the difference between the two figures is only about £13 million. It is important to put that into perspective, especially as the Government have been successively undermining the position of disabled workers employed by Remploy.

Hon. Members have referred to the special contracts arrangement scheme which has replaced the priority suppliers scheme. The hon. Member for Hertfordshire, North (Mr. Heald) said that that was inevitable and that the Government had to do it, but the picture is not quite as he paints it. The Secretary of State for Employment responded with remarkable alacrity to the European directive, even though he champions himself as a bulldog figure. On that occasion, he behaved more like a poodle. He did not seriously challenge the European Commission and negotiate a sensible response to its directive: he simply accepted it. It is interesting that when it comes to unfettered market forces and commercial interests, the Secretary of State for Employment—the great Euro-sceptic—simply rolls over in front of the European Commission and lies down. We ought to note that.

The change in policy has contributed to a severe reduction in orders from the Ministry of Defence. The work that Remploy performs for the Ministry of Defence is worth about £10 million, a decline from £17.5 million. That severe drop is affecting Remploy extremely seriously and bearing down on the earnings of very low-paid workers. Average earnings at Remploy are £150.83 for a 37.5-hour week. That is barely £4 an hour, on which it is almost impossible to subsist.

Mr. Heald: When there are fewer soldiers, fewer uniforms are required. How would the hon. Gentleman deal with that situation?

Mr. Hain: The hon. Gentleman is surely not suggesting that orders to Remploy have fallen by 50 per cent. because the Ministry of Defence budget has almost halved or that the number of soldiers has halved. I am sure that he would not pretend that that is the case. Remploy has been directly affected by a punitive change in policy forced on it by the Government.

There is a very strong feeling among Remploy workers in my constituency that the company, under pressure from the Government, has lost its way. Many feel extremely bitter. I was pleased to attend the recent celebration of the Neath Remploy factory's 50th anniversary. The local manager is widely respected, but there is a feeling elsewhere in the company that its whole nature is being transformed and that senior managers are behaving rather like senior managers elsewhere in industry—taking a lot of the loot and behaving like yuppie managers instead of responsible managers supporting a crucial and distinct local industry. In short, the nature of Remploy is changing under direct pressure from the Government.

One example of such change, to which my hon. Friends have referred, is the interwork scheme. The recruitment policy has completely changed. Under instruction from the Employment Service, the company has stopped all recruitment of disabled people to Remploy factories and introduced a scheme called interwork, which is agency based and through which an employee with a disability is given work outside Remploy.

Most of the 1,700 disabled employees on interwork are paid at below Remploy rates of pay and I understand that most people stay on the interwork scheme for an average of only six months. Little or no training is given, most workers are denied the basic right to join a trade union and many are not aware of the Remploy wage agreement, which was signed by the trade unions and the company and was supposed to protect everyone on interwork by maintaining conditions. But the company has not honoured that agreement and more recently—I understand—has completely departed from it.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): I declare an interest in that my trade union, the Manufacturing, Science and Finance Union, recruits the managers of Remploy. In their defence, will my hon. Friend recognise the courage of some of Remploy's senior managers in striking a very firm position in front of the Employment Select Committee in favour of a levy grant scheme, which would benefit good employers and penalise bad employers through the imposition of a levy and would enable Remploy to be free of Government control? In striking such a position, the managers of Remploy have spoken not only for themselves and the company, but for all disabled people.

Mr. Hain: My hon. Friend makes a fair point and I am grateful for his correction. I was talking more about senior managers. Many of the local managers, especially those with whom I deal in my constituency, have an honourable record, alongside their workers, in defending the interests and tradition of Remploy. Largely as a result of interwork and other pressures, the standard of living of people with disabilities is declining. The average pay of interwork employees is very low—in some cases about £100 for a 37.5-hour week, which is even lower than the basic Remploy pay of £126 per week.

Instead of giving disabled people in Remploy the dignity of work, I charge the Government with pushing them down the road of exploitation. A total change of policy at Government level is needed to remedy the situation.

10.56 am

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): First, on the priority suppliers scheme and in view of what was said earlier, I should put it on record that some of us Opposition Members—I know that there are also some on the Conservative Benches—take the view that directives from the Common Market should be totally ignored.

I am staggered at the Secretary of State for Employment, who is supposed to have some anti-market tinge—I am not sure about it as he voted for the single European market on a guillotine along with Lady Thatcher and all the rest—and who tries to create the image that somehow all that comes out of the Common Market is bad. Despite that image, he seemed to be tumbling over himself to get the directive affecting Remploy through.

Let me make it plain that when we get the next Labour Government, very shortly, some of us will be standing up against the Common Market just as fiercely as I have done over many years. If the Common Market affects disabled workers such as those at Remploy, my efforts will be redoubled. I want to place that on the record now so that my hon. Friends on the Front Bench can understand exactly the intentions of some of us. We are fed up to the back teeth with bureaucrats in the Common Market and others who profess to be parliamentarians and politicians telling us what to do.

[Mr. Dennis Skinner]

This debate has shown us precisely what can happen under the treaty of Rome: free movement of capital and labour. I emphasise that fact for my hon. Friends. That is what the Rome treaty is all about. We shall get more such directives, freeing up the market, and so on. If we are to defend and support workers like the 9,000 to whom my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) referred under a future Labour Government, we have to subsidise them. It is impossible in this day and age to run Remploy factories for disabled people on the basis that somehow they will be able to compete with the Pacific rim and other slave labour economies. Some people on the Tory Front Bench would love that situation—that is why they are going down that road—but that is not a job for people here. It is not a job for socialists, as some us still proudly call ourselves. The strong helping the weak is what Remploy is all about. It is about people who have been crippled in all kinds of ways needing help from the strong.

What is wrong with subsidies anyway? Not one Member of Parliament would be in this Chamber this morning, or trotting around outside, if we were not subsidised by the taxpayer—and not at £10,000 per annum as the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) suggested, but at £33,000 apiece. So let us get things into proper perspective. Plenty of people in Britain get subsidies. What about farmers? Every family in Britain pays £28 a week to subsidise farmers under the common agricultural policy. Are we saying that we could get rid of all that subsidy, when we import about 60 per cent. of our food? That is mainly, but not entirely, the reason why the subsidies are paid. Are we going to say that we are not going to allow them to provide that food? That is a nonsense.

The defence industry is subsidised to the tune of God knows how many billions of pounds every year. Nissan came to Britain with a £300 million subsidy to set up a factory in the north-east.

Mr. Cousins: Not true.

Mr. Skinner: The truth is that Nissan had a £300 million donation from the British taxpayer when it set up its factory in the north-east to provide non-union labour, which is what most of it is.

Subsidies extend far and wide. Employers who pay poverty-stricken workers £2 an hour or less while the families get family credit are being subsidised to the tune of £2.4 billion per annum to provide that slave labour. The list is endless. What about Lloyd's? The fact that Lloyd's names have been subsidised to the tune of £2.8 billion in tax relief has just come out into the open. That is an extremely significant sum compared with the amount going to disabled people in Remploy factories. The top four clearing banks have had a £5 billion subsidy in writing off tax against their so-called irrecoverable debts.

That is why I took part in a campaign to try to save the Alfreton factory from closure. I raised the matter on the Floor of the House on 5 April and asked the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, who represents the constituency involved and is a Minister in the appropriate Department, to intervene. We had a massive rally at Alfreton. It was one of the proudest days of my life. People came from all parts of the country, including the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness, from Northern Ireland and from all parts of Britain, in the pouring rain. Apart from all the others, 400 or 500 people in wheelchairs took part in a march through Alfreton to save a factory which employed 74 people—who were to be shunted to other jobs in other factories, if they could move.

It is a sad day when people can talk about subsidies for disabled people, giving the impression that we live in a world in which one can provide work for such people without subsidies. We should be proud of the fact that we are helping to keep people in employment at a time when medical science has ensured that the disabled live longer. If we had been debating the subject 50 years go, many of them would not have been able to work in a factory. Because of the national health service, they are now able to go to work and we should be proud that many of them do.

We should be doubling the number of Remploy and similar factories, instead of closing them as the factory at Alfreton was closed. Notwithstanding the Government's position on market forces, the Minister, on their behalf, should understand that if we are to help disabled people to have some dignity and to go to work, we should not only be ensuring their employment but doubling their wages as well.

11.4 am

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): It has always been my political misfortune to be the straight man in the double act, but I never anticipated that I would have to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). I must inform him, the Minister and the House that, if we had a proper scheme for funding these facilities, schemes and resources, the word subsidy—both as my hon. Friend and as the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) used it—need never be used again.

If we had a levy grant scheme, which is what the managers of Remploy have been trying to persuade the Government and the Select Committee on Employment to accept and which would deal honourably and fairly with people with disabilities and good employers in all sectors of British enterprise who deal fairly with people with disabilities, it could be financed by a levy on those employers across the spectrum of British enterprise who do not deal fairly and sensibly with such people. For many years, it has been Remploy's desire to escape the iron hand of Ministers and to put itself and organisations such as the Shaw Trust on a proper basis—one in which they would not be dependent on Government grants and handouts and flows of money that could be represented as subsidies.

If we had such a self-financing scheme, such orgsanisations would be free of all that and could build more facilities, employ more people, supervise the interwork scheme and make it meaningful, and operate their own variations of the priority suppliers scheme. They would not be dependent on Government handouts.

If we had such a scheme, what a signal it would give to good employers in all sectors, who would be set a target that they could meet and could, individually, do right by people with disabilities. Employers who did not meet the targets would be penalised through a levy, which would work automatically, free of Government, and would provide the resources to promote further employment for people with disabilities. That is the way forward, not

through increasing subsidies or the argument about what one would call a subsidy, but through a fair system that would work automatically, independent of Government and would produce the resources to keep Remploy in business, enable it to acquire more businesses and expand its enterprises, and help organisations like the Shaw Trust to be free for ever from all this talk of subsidy. Such talk is so wrong in the context of people who want to be in the world of work and to be there honourably.

That is the way forward and I hope that the Minister will give us a clear signal this morning that that is the way in which the Government will go. Let us shift the argument away from subsidy to a levy grant scheme that will be fair to all enterprises and employers and will place the economics of Remploy on a sound basis.

11.8 am

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): I am very glad that this interesting debate has been introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton). From my recent visit—to which the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) referred—I know that my hon. Friend is held in the highest regard, not least because of his commitment to these important matters.

The future of Remploy is of great importance to hon. Members from both sides of the House who have Remploy factories within their constituencies. Such factories are based in one in seven of all constituencies in the country. I welcome the speeches by all my hon. Friends, but particularly that of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner). He spoke—if I may say so—very much like my father, who died at the fairly young age of 53 from pneumoconiosis. My father was employed in the mining industry and, if circumstances had been different at the time, he may well have made a contribution to Remploy.

The numbers of people involved in Remploy are relatively small, but they are not insignificant. More than 8,000 people with varying degrees of disability are employed by Remploy. Tony Withey, the company's chief executive—who is following our proceedings—talked of increasing that figure to about 15,000. Such an increase would be most welcome, with the important proviso that the quantity of employment should not be at the expense of the quality of training and work experience.

Many of those who work in Remploy factories have severe disabilities. Many know that they would have great difficulty in finding employment in the open market. That fact will not be changed by the legislation that is currently being considered in another place, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) reminded us. For many more, Remploy can provide a halfway house and a means of obtaining the necessary training, work experience and self-esteem—that is very important—to enable them to go out into the job marketplace to earn a living on the basis of their skills alone. We welcome the fact that Remploy is talking of adding to that side of its work, and I have no doubt that the Minister will refer to that.

We recognise that the best thing which supported employment can do for many disabled people is to equip them with the skills to allow them to work in unsupported employment. In that context, the expansion of the interwork initiative and placement by Remploy with other companies is a positive gain which should not be seen as anything else. But we would not welcome—we would resolutely oppose—any idea that an increase in out-placements for disabled Remploy workers should be substituted for the provision of supported employment in-house. That is why we are most unhappy with the idea of the Employment Service setting targets for reductions in the size of Remploy's factory work force.

By all means, increase the number of Remploy workers who are placed with firms. But do so only on the ground that that particular worker has achieved the levels of competence and confidence to allow him or her to do so on a par with other workers. We must certainly encourage disabled workers to take up opportunities to work elsewhere, but we must make sure that his or her job is filled in the Remploy factory by another disabled person, who is thereby freed from dependence on state benefits and gains the dignity of labour and a fair day's pay for a fair day's work.

We should help to match the needs of good employers with the abilities of those who are able to do the job, but we must make sure above all that the pay and conditions which that person receives in open employment are in no way inferior to the standards set by Remploy itself. We must never forget that the excellent quality of the work produced is welcomed by many consumers, and I believe that it should be welcomed by the House.

The chief executive of Remploy has spoken of the factories as

"halfway houses to jobs in other companies".

For many people, that will be the right course. For others, it may not be. But a Remploy factory is a halfway house only if it recruits and trains disabled workers. It is hard to see how the idea of a halfway house is compatible with recruiting direct from the register.

A halfway house is different from a placement agency, which seems to have been advocated by some Conservative Members. The reduction of Remploy to merely agency status would be an entirely different matter. As my hon. Friends have said, needless difficulties have been quite deliberately thrown in the way of Remploy in winning Government contracts. That has been done, we have been told most unconvincingly, with the support of the European Union.

We have seen the closure of a Remploy factory this year, and we do not want to see any more closures. Why should we? The majority of the factories were opened during the term of the first majority Labour Government between 1945 and 1951. But in spite of that, we do not claim exclusive credit for the provision of manufacturing jobs for severely disabled people. Ministers should remember that the Conservative party also had a role. Winston Churchill was Prime Minister when the principle of supported employment backed by public funds was first established under the terms of the Tomlinson report of 1943. That report was a landmark, not just because it laid the foundations for Remploy but because it was the first official recognition that the whole community had an interest in, and a responsibility for, the full participation of disabled people in society.

It would be a great pity if the Government were to desert the principle of supported employment in the same year as they have recognised for the first time that discrimination against disabled people is a problem which

[Mr. Tom Clarke]

requires tackling. It is now more than six months since Ministers said at the Dispatch Box that they would consult those involved in supported employment about what should happen.

It is more than six months since the Disability Discrimination Bill was published. Ministers have made public their intention to provide funding to profit-making private employers directly, rather than through Remploy itself. Yet I have been reliably informed that, as of Monday this week, no discussions have been held between Ministers and senior managers of Remploy on either of the main issues. Neither have discussions taken place with the trade unions. That seems to me to be both surprising and completely unacceptable.

We need to know, and Remploy needs to know, just what the Minister's intentions are. Why do Ministers see the need to provide funding directly to private companies—a perfectly reasonable question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Neath (Mr. Hain)? Is the interwork initiative which Remploy has undertaken not sufficient? What purpose is served by dividing and diverting resources away from the one agency with a proven track record in enabling disabled people to take up work in-house or elsewhere?

We also need to know what the Government intend to do about the green card system. That too has worked well in the field of supported employment, if not in the wider field of achieving the 3 per cent. target quota for disabled people in all jobs in the employment market. The scheme should not be abolished by the passage of the current legislation before the process of consultation on what is to take its place has even begun.

Opposition Members consider that now is the time for Ministers to indicate their intentions as to the future of Remploy. We want an assurance about the short-term future of the existing Remploy staff, and about current levels of funding. But such assurances are not enough. We also want assurances about the long-term future of factory jobs in Remploy, and we are entitled to know about that.

The next generation of severely disabled people should enjoy the same opportunities to work as their predecessors have had for the past 50 years. My hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness has done the House and those employed in Remploy a great service by drawing these important matters to our attention at this vital time and I trust that the Minister's response will be just as positive.

11.19 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Phillip Oppenheim): I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to this debate, which has ranged over a number of interesting and important areas. I shall do my best to respond to the points that have been made in the short time that remains.

I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Hutton) and my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) that the Government have a special and important responsibility in this area. I shall return later to some of the specific comments made by the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness. I also welcome the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham), who speaks with a special knowledge and sensitivity on this subject. He has just written a helpful and challenging paper on the issue.

It is clear that, to continue to provide meaningful and worthwhile work, Remploy cannot afford to stand still as a business. Like any other business, it must evolve and adapt if it is to keep pace with the needs of its customers. It is to Remploy's credit that it has maintained and increased its customer base over the past 50 years. The Remploy of today is known for quality and attention to detail, not just in its products and services but in its processes and work practices. Remploy wins awards and customers because it is alive to the needs of the market as well as to the needs of its work force. This is why, when one walks down most high streets today, one finds Remploy products on the shelves of all the most reputable shops.

The hon. Member for Barrow and Furness and others argued that Remploy has run into difficulties because of the withdrawal of the priority supply scheme. That is not so. The main problem facing Remploy is caused by companies that decide to subcontract some of their work to low-cost countries outside the EC. I wish to make it crystal clear that, contrary to what the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness said, the priority supply scheme had to be withdrawn because it was incompatible with EC law. That conclusion was not only confirmed by the European Commission but was based on a judgment by the European Court.

We moved rapidly to replace the scheme with a special contracts arrangement, which will give welcome help to Remploy and other supported employment providers. I understand that Remploy has already won extra business on the strength of that arrangement. I also wish to make it clear that the withdrawal of the scheme has not had, and will not have, any effect on the Government's continuing commitment to fund supported employment through a variety of grants.

It is easy for Opposition Members to say that we should have negotiated better terms. That is a good cop-out. But because of the European Court's judgment, the scheme was illegal. If the Opposition spokesman is saying that, despite it being illegal, a Labour Government would ignore the European Court's ruling, he should put that clearly on the record. I should be amazed if the Leader of the Opposition, that well-known Johnny-come-lately, that new-found singing and dancing Euro-fanatic, would break European law.

Mr. Tom Clarke: The Minister says that the scheme was illegal. Who advised the Government that it was illegal, and why did not other European Governments take the same view?

Mr. Oppenheim: Both Government lawyers and the European Commission advised us that it was illegal. I have no information that other European countries have not had to take the same action. *[Interruption.]* If the hon. Gentleman thinks otherwise, perhaps he would supply evidence. If he now says that it would be Labour policy to break European Court of Justice rulings, I should be interested to know. It is absolutely clear that there are divisions in the Labour party on that issue.

I enjoyed the eloquent attack by the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) on the attitude not only of his current leader but of his former leader, who is now a European Commissioner. It is nice to see that divisions on this issue are fairly widespread and not confined to the Conservative party.

I was less keen on the comments by the hon. Member for Bolsover about Alfreton. He spoke to me at length on this issue in a helpful way before the closure, but may I try to set the matter straight? As the Alfreton factory was in my constituency, I made it my business to look into the merger in great detail. I sought and received personal assurances from Remploy management about a variety of issues, including the new travel arrangements, and in April I met a number of those affected with their union representatives. Not a single disabled employee from Alfreton was made redundant as a result of the merger. Moreover, I am confident that Remploy dealt sympathetically with all the employees affected. Every disabled employee was offered the chance of relocation to a factory that was fairly nearby and, where appropriate, help with transport arrangements and costs.

All those affected were offered counselling to discuss the options and any individual problems that arose. They were also given a trial period of 13 weeks to help them decide whether they wanted to move, and a generous relocation package. That package included additional travel costs to be paid by the company; maintenance of all previous job grades for at least six months; bonuses to be paid at the employee's average for the first three months; and an ex-gratia disturbance allowance of £450.

Mr. Skinner: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Oppenheim: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will forgive me, but I have limited time and must deal with a number of other issues.

May I say to the hon. Member for Bolsover and others that people in Amber Valley are not slow to lift their pens and write to me about issues that concern them. I receive a huge volume of correspondence but I did not receive a single letter from constituents before the factory closure, and I received only one letter from someone who was at the union meeting that I attended. The hon. Gentleman's description of a mass rally in protest of Alfreton's closure does not comply with newspaper reports—*[Interruption.]* All right, the reporters were wrong and the hon. Member for Bolsover got it right.

Mr. Skinner *rose*—

Mr. Oppenheim: I shall move on to other important issues.

May I say to Opposition Members and Remploy employees that if we are to guarantee the continuance of Remploy and jobs for Remploy employees, we must ensure that Remploy is competitive. There may well be occasions when Remploy management takes the view—it is best placed to know—that factories must merge. If the Opposition say that they would give a clear commitment that a future Labour Government, if there is one, would not allow Remploy to merge factories, they should make that commitment here and now. It is clear that the Opposition spokesman is not prepared to make that commitment and that the Opposition will not commit themselves to preventing Remploy from merging factories.

If and when Remploy merges its factories, as it did at Alfreton, the House—the Government and we as constituency Members of Parliament—must ensure that the terms and conditions of employees who move to merged factories are dealt with sensitively, that they are treated properly and that their needs are taken care of. I am confident that that is what happened in the case of Alfreton.

May I reply to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) on the green card? All groups with an interest in supported employment, including Remploy, are to be consulted on the new criteria for determining entry to the supported employment programme. A consultative document will be issued shortly but I assure the right hon. Gentleman that we have no plans to change the broad criteria or scale of the programme.

The right hon. Gentleman rightly raised the general commitment to Remploy and sheltered employment. May I make it clear to him that our commitment is solid and wholehearted? Remploy is an integral part of supported employment provision in the United Kingdom. It receives a substantial amount of Government funding each year. The supported employment programme, of which Remploy is just one part, is designed to supply work for severely disabled people who have little chance of getting or retaining work in open employment.

In total, 22,000 people were helped by the programme last year, at a cost of £150 million. That included 8,900 severely disabled people in Remploy, at a cost of £92 million. The average Government subsidy per Remploy worker was £10,212 for the financial year just ended. That represents £11,395 for each Remploy factory worker, and £4,320 for every disabled person on the interwork scheme.

Overall, the numbers of people in Remploy have increased since 1979 and have increased in the past four years. That is a measure of our firm commitment to Remploy, which will be a continuing commitment.

In responding to the arguments expressed this morning, I fully recognise the concern and sincerity of every hon. Member on both sides of the House who has contributed to the debate. Remploy has had a long and honourable history since its establishment in 1944. It is a highly worthwhile organisation, which rightly arouses great feelings of warmth and affection. However, it would be wrong if we allowed that affection to get in the way of Remploy's need to be dynamic as a business. Remploy—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We must move to the next topic, which is Cyprus.

Cyprus

11.30 am

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Anyone who visits Cyprus is affected in two quite different ways—first by the beauty of that delightful island, and secondly by the tragedy of its continued division. It is because of that that I make no apology for initiating yet another debate on Cyprus.

Obviously, there will be a certain repetition in the speeches in the debate, simply because the issues have not changed. The fundamental injustices remain. When I first visited Cyprus, soon after the events of 1974, there was initially a spirit of optimism that the late President Makarios might secure a settlement. However, despite frequent attempts by the United Nations to broker a settlement, nothing has changed fundamentally since then.

In August, we shall celebrate the 50th anniversary of VJ day, the coming of peace and the end of the last war. That historic day will be a day of great meaning for the President of Cyprus, who took part in that war as an airman on the allied side. We are also about to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the formation of the United Nations, which was meant to usher in a better world.

However, later this year, there will be another anniversary—the 21st anniversary of the invasion of Cyprus by the Turks in 1974. That is no cause for celebration. It is no coming of age. All the Cypriots will be doing is seeking the key to the door—the key to the door of the Turkish Cypriots, who have caused the island to remain divided for 21 years. Instead of a divided island, the Cypriots want a united island. Instead of an army of occupation, they want the restoration of democracy throughout the island. Instead of their homes being full of settlers from Turkey, the refugees want to be free to return to them.

The relatives of the missing persons want to know what has happened to their loved ones in the past 21 years. After such a delay, it is natural that they should dread the worst, but hope springs eternal in the human breast and they continue to hope for the best. They want at least an end to the uncertainty. If they are still alive, the missing persons will have changed dramatically. Children have become adults, middle-aged people have become pensioners and the young may well have become middle-aged grandparents without the joy of knowing their grandchildren.

The uncertainty about the fate of the missing persons demonstrates the inhuman legacy of 1974. Children have been denied the knowledge of what has happened to their parents and wives the knowledge of what has happened to their husbands. It is a tribute to the loyalty of the Cypriots that they have remained loyal to the memories of their loved ones and have not, in spite of a gap of 21 years, sought to remarry and set up new relationships.

I remember seeing the green line for the first time in the 1970s. I remember going back to the green line about two years ago with my hon. Friends the Members for Basildon (Mr. Amess)—he does move outside Essex sometimes, Madam Deputy Speaker—and for Chelmsford (Mr. Burns), who this morning has to adopt the Trappist vows of the Whips Office, as does my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman), who is a staunch supporter of Cyprus.

When one visits the green line, one can see the shops on the Turkish side. They were once thriving businesses. One sees the shops empty, and the signs of a sudden withdrawal. I shall always remember looking at a tailor's shop in which cloth remained on display in the window because the tailor had assumed, when he left, that he would be able to return in a matter of months, if not weeks.

I remember talking to someone in 1979, who said that, when he left his home in the north, his father made a special effort to take the title deeds with him because he hoped to be able to return shortly. Twenty-one years later, the title deeds have become greyer, the print on them has become lighter, but there is no possibility today of their returning to that home tomorrow.

When I was in Cyprus with my hon. Friends the Members for Chelmsford and for Basildon, I spoke to the mayor in exile from Famagusta. We went to Famagusta, and from its borders we could see people pointing out, but unable to go and live in, the homes that had been their family houses for generations. They knew that those houses were now occupied by settlers from Turkey rather than by their family.

One thinks of the hotel keepers of Varosha, whose hotels were bombed in 1974. Until then, Varosha had been a mecca for Mediterranean tourists. Today, it plays host to rats and stray dogs. Those half-destroyed hotels are a monument to the indifference of the world to the fate of Cyprus. One thinks of the orange groves of Cyprus, tended by generations of Greek Cypriots, which are now tended by Turkish settlers.

It is surely unacceptable that about 100,000 people should be forcibly removed from their homes and made to go and live somewhere else.

We must also consider the plight of the small Greek Cypriot enclave in northern Cyprus. Those Greek Cypriots feel cut off from the rest of the world, difficult as it is for visitors to go and see them and impossible as it is for them to go to other parts of Cyprus.

In the state of separatism that has existed since 1974, the northern Cyprus economy has stagnated. Tourism has suffered and real incomes are low whereas, in the southern part of the island, there has been a substantial increase in real incomes.

There is a significant danger that, after 21 years, there may be an institutionalisation of the division of the island. Historically, Turkish and Greek Cypriots lived together in the same villages. They had different religions and different languages, but they lived in the same village and played football, worked and socialised together. However, for a whole generation now, Greek Cypriot has not met Turkish Cypriot and vice versa.

Let us consider what is happening in Cyprus. It becomes much more difficult for the people concerned to regard themselves as Cypriots when they live in northern Cyprus and may well not have seen a Greek Cypriot for a long time.

I am sure that everyone in the House finds the division of the island unacceptable. One can never accept that a family should be forced for ever and a day not to live in what has been their family home. I am sure that everyone would want the resolutions of the United Nations about Cyprus to be honoured by both parties in that country.

Another issue that concerns the House is Cyprus's relations with the European Union, with which Cyprus has sought a closer relationship for a long time. In 1979,

when I was merely a candidate for the European Parliament, I met a representative of the Government of Cyprus in Charlie's bar in Nicosia, where we enjoyed the most excellent mezze. He said that he wanted the association agreement between Cyprus and the European Community to be accepted. Cyprus saw that agreement as a stepping stone to a much closer relationship with the European Union.

Cyprus fulfils all of the criteria for admission to the European Union: it is a democracy and it has a successful economy. Cyprus's growth rate in the past decade has been twice that of most countries in the European Union. Its gross domestic product per capita is higher than that of Greece and of Portugal and it conducts more than half its trade with European Union countries. It is a European country because Cyprus is part of the cradle of European civilisation.

That is why I am pleased that the European Union has agreed in principle to consider Cyprus's application as soon as the intergovernmental conference has ended. I regret the fact that consideration of Cyprus's application has been linked to the conclusion of the intergovernmental conference, especially in view of the rumour circulating last week that Chancellor Kohl wants to postpone the conference by a year so that it does not take place before the next British general election. If that were to happen, one would hope that Cyprus's application could be squeezed in some time in 1996 rather than delayed until 1998 or 1999.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will confirm this morning that the division of the island can never be used as an excuse to delay Cyprus's application to join the European Union. To do so would present to the minority on the island the right of veto over the majority view. Only one Government in Cyprus is recognised by the European Union and we must negotiate with, and talk to, that Government. It would be quite wrong for a regime that is not recognised by the European Union to have the right of veto over the actions of the Government of Cyprus.

As to Turkey's application to join the European Union, I expect the Union to adhere to the policy of Her Majesty's Government and not to consider that application until there is a solution to the Cyprus problem. Obviously, if Turkey, Cyprus and Greece were members of the European Union, that might solve many of the political problems in that part of the world. However, I do not think that Turkey can be a member of the European Union while the Cypriot problem remains unresolved.

I said in this place on a previous occasion that peace in the middle east will be achieved by a series of building blocks. We have seen that in the relationship between Israel and her neighbours. Camp David was followed by agreements between Prime Minister Rabin and Mr. Arafat which have led to self-rule in Gaza and Jericho and which may have further benefits. That is why confidence-building measures between the two communities in Cyprus are essential in order to bring about a final solution to the problems.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the confidence-building measures should be implemented without any conditions?

Mr. Marshall: I think that it would be going too far to say that the measures should be implemented without any conditions. I am reminded of the occasion when a prayer for peace in Northern Ireland was said in St. Margaret's church in Westminster. The former Member for South Down, Mr. Enoch Powell, was a member of the congregation and when the vicar said, "We pray for peace in Northern Ireland," Mr. Powell asked, "But on what terms?" It would be quite wrong to expect the Greek Cypriots to agree to confidence-building measures while the island remained divided.

Mr. Taylor: I thank the hon. Gentleman for giving way again on that very important point. If he disputes the qualification "without any conditions", does he agree with the alternative view—as expressed by Mr. Denktash, the head of the Turkish Cypriot community—that both sides of the argument should accept the confidence-building measures on the bases proposed and recommended by the United Nations?

Mr. Marshall: There is a lot of evidence that Mr. Denktash is dragging his feet on the matter. We hoped that a series of meetings would take place when representatives of the two communities visited London recently. The right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor)—whom I used to call an hon. Friend in another Parliament—will know that only one meeting took place in London and that the Turkish Cypriots did not give any sign that they wished to talk with the Greek Cypriots. The initiative in those meetings lay with President Clerides, who agreed to them. It then transpired that the Turkish Cypriots had no desire to reach any resolution.

Confidence-building measures in Varosha and Nicosia would benefit both Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Today, Varosha is a mausoleum. It was once home to some of the finest hotels in Europe, but today it is a resting place for dead rats, mice, cats and dogs, and offers employment to no one. If the hotels in Varosha could be rebuilt, tourism in northern Cyprus would flourish and employment opportunities could be developed to the benefit of both communities, as the United Nations has pointed out.

The reopening of Nicosia international airport would benefit the Turkish community. At present, Turkish Cypriots do not have direct international flights, other than those to and from Turkey. If Nicosia international airport were reopened, tourism would benefit, exports would increase and real incomes would rise. It would also remove the feeling of isolation from which the Turkish Cypriots must suffer. The failure of the confidence-building measures suggests that there is a spirit of bloody-mindedness—

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): Does my hon. Friend recall the comment attributed to Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali that talks had failed because of a lack of political will on the Turkish Cypriot side?

Mr. Marshall: I think that I have said broadly the same thing—although with none of the eloquence of the representative of the United Nations and of my hon. Friend. I believe that the Greek Cypriots have demonstrated a desire to reach a settlement—President Clerides certainly did so by agreeing to talks in London.

What can we do to try to resolve the situation? The military option was ignored in 1974 when British troops were stationed on the island and Turkish forces might have been prevented from landing. Having abandoned that option in 1974, we must now adopt a carrot-and-stick approach. I believe that the confidence-building measures will be the incentives for the Turkish Cypriots.

[Mr. Marshall]

On the negative side of the equation, we must make it clear that the British Government will never recognise the Denktash regime, that we will not trade with northern Cyprus and that we will welcome Cyprus into the European Union. Of course, that is only part of the solution. I believe that it is high time, nearly 21 years after the events of 1974, for an international conference on Cyprus. I would also like to think that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary might visit Cyprus in the not too distant future. President Eisenhower won the 1952 presidential election with the promise:

"I shall go to Korea."

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to say that if he will not go to Cyprus, at least the Foreign Secretary might do so.

11.49 am

Mr. Tom Cox (Tooting): As always, I warmly congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on again giving the House the opportunity to discuss Cyprus. I believe that there is no Parliament in the world, outside Cyprus, that discusses the issue more than we do.

As the hon. Gentleman said, next month Cypriots and their friends in Cyprus, in the United Kingdom and, indeed, throughout the world, and their friends, will be remembering those dark, brutal days when Cyprus was invaded by the Turkish army in 1974. I and many other people believe that there has been so little progress after nearly 21 years because of the lack of decisive action by British Governments, whether Conservative or Labour. I hope that this debate will give both the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East (Ms Quin) the opportunity to tell us how they see the issue.

I shall follow up many of the points made by the hon. Member for Hendon, South. No one can say that enormous efforts have not been made over the years to try to get an honourable settlement. Sadly, they have always collapsed and there is no doubt whatsoever why. No matter who has been involved in intercommunal talks or confidence-building measures, they have always come to the same conclusion: the problem is the attitude of Mr. Denktash and his friends and supporters in Turkey.

There can be no greater indictment of Denktash than that made last July by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who said that the lack of progress in the talks that he had been requested to make on behalf of the Security Council was due entirely to the actions of Mr. Denktash.

Mr. Nirj Joseph Deva (Brentford and Isleworth) *rose—*

Mr. Cox: No, I shall not give way. [HON. MEMBERS: "Ah!"] I am not frightened to give way, but many hon. Members wish to speak. I shall not give way because of the time.

What saddens me and many other hon. Members, as the hon. Member for Hendon, South rightly said, is that it is the Turkish Cypriots who suffer most. One sees ample evidence of that and the Minister must know it. We know that there are contacts between Government officials and people in northern Cyprus. We know the conditions in the economy—the lack of investment, the enormous unemployment, the extremely high rate of inflation and the decline of the tourist industry.

Against that background, I believe that Mr. Denktash has, like many of the old leaders of the former communist eastern European countries, closed his eyes and ears to the devastation that he is causing in the country to which he claims to be so committed. That is why this debate is so important. The issue of Cyprus is in a new phase now that an application has been made by the Republic of Cyprus to join the European Union.

I hope to hear this morning a firm commitment from the Government and the Opposition that Britain supports that application and totally rejects the statement of the Prime Minister of Turkey, Mrs. Ciller, in the United States earlier this year that the solution to the Cyprus problem will be found only when Turkey is admitted to the European Union. We must make it loud and clear to her and to her Government that under no circumstances whatsoever will that be a trading point.

I am sure that the Minister is aware of the some of the points that I intend to make. Two days ago, the EU-Cyprus Association Council met in Luxembourg at ministerial level. It further supported Cyprus's application for membership of the Union. That meeting built on a meeting in Brussels on 8 June this year, which again gave clear guidelines. I have a copy of the document discussed in Brussels, which no doubt the Minister will have seen, and which gives clear guidelines for the structured dialogue that will take place between the European Union and Cyprus.

The document states:

"The existing political dialogue between Cyprus and the EU on CFSP issues will be extended to include, in addition to the above mentioned meetings at the highest level and at Ministerial level, the following meetings and practices".

The document goes on to outline a whole range of issues that will be discussed in future meetings. That clearly shows the House and the Republic of Cyprus, and most certainly it will show Turkey and Mr. Denktash, that there is no stopping the application of Cyprus for membership of the European Union.

I briefly mentioned the meeting in Luxembourg on Monday and I shall quote some of the comments that were made at the meeting and in the document that was produced. The document states:

"The European Union will do all it can to ensure that the period remaining until the start of accession negotiations will be put to good use in redoubling efforts to find a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question.

The Council was also concerned by the problem of the great difference in the level of development between the island's two communities. It thus felt that Cyprus's accession to the EU should bring increased prosperity for both communities on the island, allowing the North to catch up economically and improving the outlook for employment and growth, particularly for the Turkish-Cypriot community. The Council therefore considered that the advantages of Cyprus's accession to the EU needed to be perceived more clearly by the Turkish-Cypriot community."

I have two further quotations from the document; first, it states:

"The recent initiative of the President of the French Republic, President of the European Council, inviting Cyprus to meet the Heads of State and Government at the next European Council in Cannes is a further indication of the Union's commitment to a course of action to reinforce the special relationship that already exists between us."

Secondly, it states:

"Cyprus's accession will be in the interests of all Cypriots. It, of course, goes without saying that the Republic of Cyprus remains the sole negotiating partner for the European Union."

I hope that both the Minister and my hon. Friend the Member for Gateshead, East will endorse the comments made in Monday's Luxembourg declaration and say most certainly that only the Republic of Cyprus will be involved in any discussion about the accession of Cyprus to the European Union.

Mr. Stephen Day (Cheadle): Who does the hon. Gentleman think will speak for the Turkish people when it comes to the application by Cyprus to join the European Union? It has been recognised in many UN documents that there are two communities and two peoples in Cyprus. Does the hon. Gentleman believe that the present Government of the Republic of Cyprus, who are exclusively Greek Cypriot, can really speak for the Turkish Cypriot people?

Mr. Cox: The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue. As the hon. Member for Hendon, South and I have said, Mr. Denktash had ample opportunity to speak for the people of northern Cyprus had he wished to do so. I have already commented on the statement made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations about the reason for the lack of progress. Even as progress gets under way, I am sure that if Mr. Denktash wanted to show good will, interest and support for Cyprus's application, President Clerides of the Republic of Cyprus would welcome it.

Mr. John D. Taylor: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Cox: No.

Mr. Taylor: Ah!

Mr. Cox: The right hon. Gentleman might say "Ah," but I am not giving way because I have no doubt that he will wish to speak later.

There is no going back, and we need to make that very clear to Mr. Denktash. I hope that my Front-Bench colleague will make it clear that there is no going back on Cyprus's application and that Mr. Denktash and his friends in Turkey must be told once and for all that we have had enough of their behaviour and of their stalling tactics over the past 21 years. The hon. Member for Cheadle (Mr. Day) raised an important issue, but I should like to know what he has been saying to Mr. Denktash about the efforts that have been made in those 21 years and the repeated indictment of Mr. Denktash and his lack of meaningful involvement in, or support for, an honourable settlement.

The message sent from the House today should be that the future of Cyprus—the whole of Cyprus—lies in membership of the European Union. Those of us who support that aim fully recognise that the rights of Greek and Turkish Cypriots must be safeguarded. Thankfully, I believe that we now see the beginning of an end to the tragedy that Cyprus has suffered for so nearly 21 years.

12.2 pm

Mr. Nigel Waterson (Eastbourne): I am delighted to have the opportunity to participate in another debate on Cyprus. I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on securing the debate. It is also a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who made such a powerful speech.

Cyprus matters to many people in this country who have links with it or have been there. It also matters to right hon. and hon. Members of all parties. There are some 300,000 Cypriots from both communities living in the United Kingdom, and there is a small but active and well-respected Greek Cypriot community in my constituency. The links between our two countries are very close, and long may they remain so.

The main tragedy of the division of the island, about which more than one hon. Member has spoken, is that a whole generation of people has grown up on both sides of the green line not knowing and not going to school with people from the other community. I find it interesting to meet members of earlier generations of Cypriots from both communities who always say that they have old school or college friends from the other side of the line, but that possibility of gaining a perspective on the problems of Cyprus is not open to the generation of people who have grown up since 1974.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South referred eloquently and rightly to the tragedy of the 1,619 missing Greek Cypriots of whom there is still no news. For their friends and families, that tragedy is as fresh and appalling today as it was 20 years ago.

The process that brought us to where we are today began largely with the events of 1983 and the so-called "UDI", or unilateral declaration of independence, by the regime in the north and the establishment of the so-called Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, a state—if I can use that word—which is still to be recognised by any part of the international community other than Turkey. In 1992, Dr. Boutros-Ghali proposed a set of ideas for a settlement providing a unitary but also bizonal, bicommunal federal state which has been bandied back and forth ever since.

As has been said, in March 1993 a package of confidence-building measures was introduced in respect of Varosha and Nicosia airport. It is one of life's unpleasant experiences to look across that suburb of Famagusta-Varosha and see the waste of property, human endeavour and economic resources.

It is fair to say that, throughout the discussion on the CBMs, President Clerides has accepted with open arms almost all the terms put to him, but there came a point when he, like many of us, took the view that the CBMs were becoming an end in themselves. Because there seemed to be no apparent progress in the short or medium term, it seemed that the CBMs would drag on. There was a real danger, not only in Cyprus but in the international community, that we would all lose sight of what the CBMs were for, which was to lay the groundwork for an overall settlement of the Cyprus problem. There were face-to-face discussions at various times, but they failed to produce results, although the activities of Joe Clark, the UN special representative, deserve praise.

As I mentioned in an intervention, it was Dr. Boutros-Ghali who cited a lack of political will on the part of the Turkish Cypriots as the reason for the failure to make progress. However, progress was made on 6 March this year when the Foreign Affairs Council agreed on the terms of a customs union with Turkey and on accession negotiations with Cyprus to start six months after the end of the intergovernmental conference.

[Mr. Nigel Waterson]

I endorse what my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South said about the rumours that the end of IGC might be postponed and hope that the time scale for a solution for the Cyprus negotiations will not be extended.

The agreement also provides for a full and structured dialogue between the EU and Cyprus. Further details were discussed at the EU-Cyprus Association Council in June. It would be difficult not to agree that that was an excellent agreement for Cyprus. It has, rightly, been warmly welcomed by the Cypriot Government. President Clerides praised it and singled out the British Government in particular for their helpful contribution under the French presidency towards the final result. We have a tangible hope of great progress and a final solution of the Cyprus problem.

The communiqué issued in March by the EU Foreign Affairs Council stated:

"the accession of Cyprus to the EU should lead to greater security and prosperity for each of the island's two communities",

which is right and fair. It goes on to state:

"the accession negotiations will start on the basis of proposals by the Commission six months after the 1996 Conference, and taking its results into due account."

The communiqué also confirms

"the EU's intention of continuing to support by all means at its disposal the efforts of the United Nations to achieve a global settlement of the Cypriot question."

It is important that we should not lose sight of that, but the document did not make any definite or clear link between the two matters.

As hon. Members have said already, both parts of Cyprus should join the EU together and, ideally, at the same time. It cannot be right, however, that the intransigence of the regime in the north should hold up the accession of the republic. There is a perfectly good precedent in Germany for one part of a state to join followed by another.

As we have heard, the Republic of Cyprus is almost uniquely qualified to join the EU on practically all grounds, especially economic. It is actually rather better qualified than some of the existing members would be, were they applying for membership today.

There are tangible benefits for both communities. It is arguable that the benefits are much greater and more tangible for those living in the north. The population of the occupied area, including the settlers, is some 30 per cent. of that of the south, but the gross national product in 1992 was less than 8 per cent. of the latter. Gross national product per capita was about one quarter of that in the Government-controlled area. Imports were only 9 per cent. of GNP, exports only about 5 per cent. and tourist revenues about 10 per cent. The rate of economic growth was about half that in the area controlled by the republic. It is well known that there are extremely high rates of inflation in the north. I am indebted for some of those figures to the Office for the Study of the Cyprus Problem.

It seems perfectly clear that, although both communities have something to gain, those in the north have most to gain in economic terms. There will be costs of reunification, as there were in Germany, but my impression, from discussing those issues with Greek Cypriots and Ministers, is that they are happy to shoulder those costs and regard the benefits of synergy with both economies united as potentially massive, dealing with the shortage of labour in the south and producing more opportunities for investment in the north once that linkage is made.

It is important that negotiations go ahead in parallel for the intercommunal problem to be resolved, as well as for accession to the European Union. They should go ahead in parallel, but not be directly linked.

I hope, as I am sure all right hon. and hon. Members do, that both will reach fruition at roughly the same time and each will encourage the other, but, at the end of the day, there are two possible results that we cannot possibly accept. One is a permanent partition of the island or even, as has been threatened by Turkish Ministers recently, its integration into Turkey. The other is the possibility of a veto by the north of Cyprus on Cyprus's rapid movement towards membership of the European Union.

12.12 pm

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): I have known Greek and Turkish Cyprus for many years. Unlike hon. Members who have spoken previously and who have large Greek Cypriot communities in their constituencies, as several have already declared, I have neither a Turkish Cypriot nor a Greek Cypriot in my constituency; therefore, I am not inclined to take either side.

The fact that there are two sides means that one must consider the point of view of both and not articulate the bias of one side only. As one who wants a settlement in Cyprus, the United Nations confidence-building measures to proceed as rapidly as possible and Cyprus's successful accession into the European Union, I consider it a great disservice to all the people of Cyprus for hon. Members to insult the leaders of one of the two communities on the island.

It was most unreasonable and unhelpful for the hon. Member for Tooting (Mr. Cox), who was fearful to give way to me, to compare President Denktash of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus with communist leaders in East Germany.

Rauf Denktash, the head of the Turkish Cypriot community, was elected in democratic elections in which many political parties participated.

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): Does the right hon. Gentleman not recognise that Mr. Denktash leads a regime that is illegal, is not recognised by the United Nations and, apart from Turkey, has no recognition whatever? So it is not acceptable for a democratic institution such as the House to speak about Mr. Denktash's position in the same way as one would speak about the position of President Clerides.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Lady either does not understand or has missed the point. I am referring to the point made by the hon. Member for Tooting, who compared President Denktash with a communist leader in East Germany, no doubt someone like Ulbricht. It is an insulting comparison and totally inaccurate, because there has been democracy in northern Cyprus for many years. Since 1974, there has been election after election with multiple parties taking part including those who represent the left, the centre and the right. In the recent presidential elections, President Denktash was not elected in the first round, as Cyprus has a similar system to France; he was elected in the second round, which shows that there was fair play from

beginning to end. It does not help a settlement in Cyprus for hon. Members to demonstrate bias and to insult leaders of one community or the other.

The hon. Member for Tooting said that the trouble commenced in Cyprus following the bloody intervention of the Turkish army in 1974. It is rather like Ireland, as it depends on the date when one starts. In Ireland, I always start with the garden of Eden, because any other date will certainly be wrong.

The hon. Member for Tooting continuously avoids the reality that the troubles in Cyprus started 25 years ago. There has been a division on that island for 25 years but, worse still, the bloody part of it was the overthrow of the elected Greek Cypriot President, Archbishop Makarios, by the friends of some of the people whom the hon. Member for Tooting now supports. President Sampson was a former terrorist who overthrew the elected President of Cyprus supported by the colonels from Athens. The hon. Gentleman conveniently avoids the fact that that started the trouble and the real division of the island in 1974.

We have to move on. Reference has been made to the comments by the United Nations Secretary-General, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, about the Turkish Cypriots dragging their feet, but we have moved beyond that and there has been progress. We have, first, the United Nations proposals for the confidence-building measures. I support them, and so do the Turkish Cypriots. The Turkish Cypriot President has made it clear that he supports the United Nations proposed package for confidence-building measures and on 16 June 1994 he confirmed his willingness to implement that package.

At that time, it was understood that President Clerides, on behalf of the Greek Cypriots, also supported the confidence-building measures. Like Conservative Members and the hon. Member for Tooting, we want the confidence-building measures to proceed. It would mean the return of thousands of Greek Cypriots to Maras and the reopening of Nicosia international airport, to the advantage of the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot peoples.

Now, however, there is a problem, and it does not come from the Turkish Cypriots, who accept the confidence-building measures without any preconditions—which the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) was not prepared to do. The Greek Cypriots are now laying down conditions; they are not prepared to implement the UN proposals without conditions. That barrier now lies in the way of implementing the confidence-building measures.

I certainly support the application by Cyprus, together with that by Malta, to join the European Union. The hon. Member for Tooting said that he hoped that the EU would discuss the application with the Greek Cypriot Government. He also gave the impression—perhaps he would like to confirm it—that he was quite prepared for a divided Cyprus to enter the EU before there was a settlement in the island.

Mr. Cox: Yes, certainly.

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has confirmed it. That is a major problem, for Cyprus and for Turkey. We in the European Union have had a history of turning our backs on Turkey over the past two decades. Now, as we see other forces arising in the middle east and the eastern Mediterranean area, the EU has belatedly begun to recognise the political importance of a rapprochement between Europe and Turkey. Progress is being made with the implementation of the association agreement between Turkey and the EU—I hope that it is not too late.

If we make the same mistake with Cyprus as Europe has made with Turkey, I fear for the outcome. We must first work for a settlement in Cyprus and then proceed with its accession to full membership of the EU. This is not just my view, or that of the Turks or the Turkish Cypriots. People recognise that going ahead with Cyprus's membership of the EU before there is a settlement can mean only that the Greek Cypriot part of the island will become part of the EU and the Turkish Cypriot part will not; so the Greek Cypriots will have achieved by another means what they have been trying to achieve for many years: enosis with Greece. They will have entered into political and economic union with Athens via membership of the EU.

Mr. John Marshall: Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is as absurd to talk about enosis with Greece in this case as it would be to say that southern Ireland had achieved a united Ireland by being part of the EU with the United Kingdom?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman may be more correct than he thinks. The fact that the Republic of Ireland is in the EU with the United Kingdom has, regrettably, encouraged the Conservative Government to produce what are known as the framework documents which would lead to a united Ireland. That is his party's policy at the moment; it is why we shall oppose it in a by-election tomorrow—

Mr. Marshall: You will not win it.

Mr. Taylor: You certainly will not—you will get 600 votes.

If we bring southern Cyprus alone into the EU, we will drive northern Cyprus—the Turkish Cypriot part of the island—into closer integration with mainland Turkey, which is the last thing we want to happen. I repeat: we want a settlement within Cyprus.

In a recent letter to right hon. and hon. Members, the Foreign Secretary said, in respect of Cyprus joining the EU:

> "We want to see the accession by a federal, bizonal, bicommunal, Cyprus, as foreseen in the United Nations Secretary-General's set of ideas".

The right hon. Gentleman thus implies that he wants a settlement in Cyprus before it joins the EU as an entire island. President Clinton says much the same. On 7 March this year, he said that he hoped that Cyprus would enter the European Union

> "as a federation in which all Cypriots could share the benefits of membership".

I want to conclude with comments by the Turkish Cypriots themselves. Hon. Members who have spoken in this debate have given the impression that the Turkish Cypriots are against membership of the EU. They are not—they would benefit from it. It has been rightly pointed out that the Turkish Cypriots are poorly off compared with their rich neighbours in Greek Cyprus. One reason for that is that the outside world recognises only Greek Cyprus, and all the international funding, from

[Mr. Taylor]

the World bank, the United Nations, and so on, goes to the Greek Cypriots. None goes to the Turkish Cypriots, so they are discriminated against and they suffer as a result.

I want to end with a quotation from President Denktash, from a speech that he made during his 14-point peace initiative of 20 January this year:

"The Turkish Cypriot side is prepared to discuss the subject of European Union membership of the future Federal Republic of Cyprus within the framework foreseen in the United Nations settle-by dates, once an agreement is reached on a bicommunal, bizonal, federal solution of the Cyprus question and the equal political status of the two peoples in Cyprus is respected."

So the Turkish Cypriots have confirmed that they want Cyprus to join the EU, but that there must first be a settlement in the island. Let us make a start with the confidence-building measures which the Turkish Cypriots support and the UN recommended. All we ask is that the Greek Cypriots support them as well, without preconditions.

12.26 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) for introducing this important debate. I am probably the most recent returner from Cyprus, as I came back from there at the beginning of last week.

Two important points need to be brought out in this debate. One of them has already been fleshed out by colleagues—the tragedy of Cyprus. I need not go on about that because it has been so well described. One incident from this, my third visit, will serve to highlight the human tragedy and focus our minds.

I was introduced to a lady in her early 40s. Her husband was one of those who went missing nearly 21 years ago, since when she has been waiting for news of him. It is worse than that, however: she cannot remarry and her life is in limbo; her child does not know his father. This is the result of a monstrous cruelty, and any pretensions that the north has to joining the club of the world in which we respect human rights must be thrown on the scrap heap until it is prepared to answer basic human rights questions about where the missing people are. What happened to them? Why are they treated in this way? They have been reduced to living in a cruel limbo.

Mr. Day: Has my hon. Friend ever considered the tragedy that overtook Cyprus just before 1974, when there was a terrible civil war between Greek Cypriots and many of them were slaughtered by other Greek Cypriots? Is there not a chance that some of the persons who went missing disappeared then? Let us not just heap all the blame on the Turkish Cypriots—we cannot prove the matter either way.

Mr. Booth: My hon. Friend has used the word "war", albeit civil war. In war, certain human rights conventions such as the Geneva convention apply, and we all subscribe to them. No such convention in the free world permits anyone to keep the husband of the lady I have described separated from her and in prison. I accept my hon. Friend's point, but I think that the House should accept my reply. The example that I have given focused my mind on the continuing crisis in Cyprus.

I was able to meet President Clerides during my time in Cyprus. I was fortunate in being briefed by the Foreign Office high commissioner before I had the meeting. Critical to me, and to the debate, is Britain's attitude towards the candidacy of Cyprus for entry into the European Union. Cyprus has the 26th largest economy in the world. With only 700,000 people, that is a remarkable performance. It is likely when it enters the EU, as I hope it will, to vote with us. It has a common history with ourselves.

I am glad that we are now saying that Cyprus, as a nation, must come into the EU. I am glad also that the Foreign Office has said that it is in favour of talks beginning next year, six months after the intergovernmental conference. I support the argument of my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South that the talks could begin sooner.

The key point is whether Turkey, or effectively the north of Cyprus, has any form of veto on the talks that are to take place. I was clearly briefed by the Foreign Office's representative in Nicosia. It would seem to be our position that, although it would be logical for the north and the south of Cyprus to come together before talks begin, the talks are scheduled to start before there is such an agreement. I was told that there is no veto in the hands of the north. Members have talked about the necessity to allow Mr. Denktash, in the north, to arrive at a solution with the south. He has had years to do that. Time after time, he has had the opportunity to reach an agreement.

The reality is that Mr. Denktash is a puppet of Ankara. It must be accepted that, with the placement of 35,000 troops in northern Cyprus, that area is no more than a vassal state of Ankara. We represent so many people who have come from Cyprus and we want to ensure that both Turkish and Greek Cypriots are given a good deal. We must accept, however, that there is an occupying army in the north of the island. First, we must put pressure on Ankara and not only on Mr. Denktash, the leader of a vassal state.

We have inherited democracy from Greece and Greek Cypriots. Those of them who talk about democracy have an accord with those of us who hold democracy dear. We in this place know the heritage of the past with Cyprus. We want to see Cyprus in Europe. Indeed, we want to see it in the EU. We owe it to Cyprus to support freedom on that island and to support its free entry into Europe.

12.33 pm

Mrs. Barbara Roche (Hornsey and Wood Green): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on his good fortune and effort in securing the debate. It is a timely debate, given the talks that were held in London less than a month ago. We have all gathered that the talks were extremely disappointing. Indeed, the Foreign Secretary told me during Foreign and Commonwealth questions on 7 June that

"they did not make as much progress as we had wished".—[*Official Report*, 7 June 1995; Vol. 261, c. 203.]

One of the reasons for the disappointment was that Turkish-Cypriot attitudes had not changed. Britain was considering what further steps to take.

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): One of the problems over the past 21 years has been the shifting positions of Mr. Denktash on the heads of agreement,

which were agreed in 1982 against the background of a federal solution that was bizonal and bicommunal. Is it not therefore time, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) said, for an international conference to ensure that all aspects of the Cyprus problem are examined? The United Nations policy, in trying over the past 21 years to shuffle off to the two communities responsibility for bringing about a peace settlement, has not proved to be effective.

Mrs. Roche: I take on board what the hon. Gentleman has said.

It is important for the British Government to use the fact that it is a guarantor power to make every effort to make it clear that one of the reasons for the failure of talks has been the intransigence of Mr. Denktash and Turkish-Cypriot attitudes. I hope that the Minister will tell us from where Britain goes forward now and what Britain will do as a guarantor power to get meaningful talks under way.

Two great issues are the missing people and enclaved families. I know that the figure has already been mentioned, but 1,619 Cypriots are still missing following the invasion and occupation of 1974. We know that President Clerides announced a new initiative in January and pledged to step up efforts to discover the fate of those Cypriots.

The hon. Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth) talked rightly about the great human tragedies behind the fate of the missing people. Bearing in mind the fact that we are a guarantor power with obligations, and taking account of the international conventions and agreements to which the Government are a subscriber, I look forward to hearing what the Minister has to say about the missing people.

Enclaved people represent a great and increasing problem. Greek Cypriots who are living in the occupied area of the north are facing severe harassment. About 20,000 Greek Cypriots lived in the area just after the Turkish invasion. There are now fewer than 500. They are mostly elderly. That is the situation despite the signing of an agreement in 1975 by Mr. Denktash guaranteeing that Greek Cypriot families would have freedom of movement and basic human rights. Those guarantees have not been honoured. One lady in this position is a primary school teacher. She has been subject to constant harassment. In a report in 1994, the UN stated that conditions for the enclaved

"fall far short of the standard of normal life."

Britain is in a unique position and has a responsibility to safeguard the lives of the enclaved families. We need to know the role that the Government are playing in ensuring that basic human rights are upheld.

There has been much discussion about the application made by Cyprus to join the EU. I think that all hon. Members on both sides of the House would like to see Cyprus accede to membership as soon as possible. It is extremely important, however, that we are reassured about the Government's position—namely, that membership does not depend on the resolution of the Cyprus problem, as many people, including Mr. Denktash, would want it to be.

Perhaps I could have the Minister's comments on the remarks of the Prime Minister. Reporting to the House on the Corfu European Council, almost a year ago, the Prime Minister commented:

"It is a considerable way off before Cyprus is likely to be admitted as a member of the Community. Certainly, if the dispute between the north and south is unresolved, it will be extremely difficult for Cyprus to be admitted to the Community . . . clearly we hope that that dispute will be resolved before it is possible for Cyprus to become a member of the European Union."—[*Official Report*, 27 June 1994; Vol. 245, c. 567.]

I completely reject the tenor of those remarks and would hope to hear a similar rejection from the Minister today. There must be no veto handed to Mr. Denktash on that area.

Both communities in Cyprus, as well as the large number of Cypriots in Britain—particularly in my constituency—have a right to expect that their Government, the British Government who represent them, will use their very best endeavours to bring about a solution to the problem. Britain should play a full part in working towards the removal of Turkish troops from Europe, the ending of the misery of the enclaved people, the right of the refugees to return, and ensuring that Cyprus is able to play its proper part in the world as a united island and country once again.

12.40 pm

Ms Joyce Quin (Gateshead, East): I congratulate the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) on his good fortune in securing an Adjournment debate on this important subject. I do not know whether he is similarly lucky in the lottery or the football pools, but he certainly seems to do well in House of Commons ballots. I am glad that, once again, he has given us this opportunity.

I know that many hon. Members, on both sides of the House, share the hon. Gentleman's commitment to bring the issue of Cyprus to the attention of the House and the public. Indeed, Opposition Front-Bench Members share that commitment as well, to ensure that the issue is fully debated and that Cyprus is not forgotten, in all the different political, foreign and domestic issues that we are dealing with in the House.

Many hon. Members have spoken from deep knowledge of Cyprus and, indeed, have spoken movingly about their personal sympathy with the plight of families who have suffered because of the division of the island.

In my own brief comments, I shall focus on the current situation in Cyprus, on the prospects for progress and on the particularly important issue of its application to the European Union. In one way, the hon. Member for Hendon, South is right: sometimes, progress seems to have been slow. None the less, things do not stand still in politics, and that is as true of Cyprus as elsewhere.

We have seen a continuation of particular trends, some of which have been highlighted by hon. Members this morning. Economically, the Republic of Cyprus is extremely successful. In that sense, there seems to be very much a growing contrast in the situation in the occupied north, where the standard of living is much lower and is getting lower all the time.

Mr. Day: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Ms Quin: I must apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I do not intend to give way. Usually, I am keen to give way in debates, but these debates are largely for Back Benchers, and time for Front-Bench Members is very squeezed. I now have only seven minutes and if I give way to the hon. Gentleman, I will then feel honour-bound to give way to other hon. Members.

[Ms Quin]

The situation in northern Cyprus is very difficult. We have seen a continuation of the trend of settlement from mainland Turkey into northern Cyprus, and Turkish Cypriots leaving the north. Recently, the Turkish Prime Minister seems to have said something to Mr. Denktash about Turkey not being able to subsidise the north in the long-term future. Although Mr. Denktash is back in power in northern Cyprus, after the elections, none the less, his victory was less decisive than in previous elections, which highlighted the growing discontent and concern in northern Cyprus.

Hon. Members have referred to the importance of negotiations and confidence-building measures. Indeed, reference was made to the situation in Varosha and to the hopes that we had that some progress could be made there, and to the reopening of Nicosia airport, which, as hon. Members pointed out, would be in the interests of Turkish Cyprus and would very much help the position of Turkish Cypriots there. Therefore, it is particularly sad that progress has not been able to be made.

Yet, of course, we know that the search for a settlement, to agree confidence-building measures, must continue. It has to be persevered with. There is really no alternative other than to embark on that course of action. That is particularly true given the application of the Republic of Cyprus to join the European Union. Labour has welcomed that application and we strongly support it. Perhaps I can point out to the House that Labour is already working with its sister party in Cyprus, EDEK, within the European Parliament and the European institutions in preparation for that enlargement and accession.

It is true that, economically, the Republic of Cyprus is nearer to fulfilling the criteria for European monetary union, for example, than many members of the European Union itself. The only criterion on which it is out of line, but not far, is on interest rates. It already fulfils the other criteria. Indeed, if the present Government persist in their European approach, it could mean that Cyprus will be playing more of a role at the heart of Europe than Britain, despite our Prime Minister's claims to be at the heart of Europe.

There will, of course, be economic difficulties. I think that they will be fairly modest in scale, but concern has been expressed about difficulties that particular industries in Cyprus might face, and the situation concerning capital and exchange controls. But there is a great determination on the part of the Republic of Cyprus to make the application to the European Union a successful one. I am very glad that the timetable has been agreed and that negotiations will begin six months after the ending of the IGC.

Some hon. Members talked about a trade-off with Turkey. I very much support my hon. Friends who said that Turkey must not be able to have a veto on the application of Cyprus. I also support their views and share their concern about the question of EU membership for Turkey itself. We know, of course, that Turkey was allowed an association agreement, but I understand that that agreement is partly frozen today because of the legitimate concerns about human rights in Turkey. Perhaps the Minister will give us an update on that situation.

There are questions about dealings with the Denktash regime, but I reiterate the point that was made by my hon. Friends that the lines of communication are already open in that respect. We want to use the links that we have to encourage both Turkish Cyprus and Turkey to be ready to negotiate properly and to begin to move towards a settlement. I believe that nobody can doubt that a settlement would be in the interests of all, especially a settlement based on the integrity of the island, and respect for human rights, for minority as well as majority rights. I believe that EU membership can be a way of promoting that and can lead to a situation that would be in the interests of both Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

Federation was mentioned, and there are, of course, many federal examples in the European Union and outside it: the Federal Republic of Germany, the federal arrangements in Spain or, indeed, the federal system in Switzerland. There are all kinds of interesting federal examples that one can look at. Federation must mean respect for human rights and it must, particularly on an island such as Cyprus, take into account the interests of the island as a whole.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) spoke—quite rightly—of the important British role, because of our position as guarantor power, our strong troop presence on the island, our strong political and social links with the island and the fact that we are a member of the European Union and of the United Nations Security Council. All those factors are important, and give us a particular responsibility. The United States' role is also vital in that respect.

The Labour party is strongly committed to a peaceful resolution of the Cyprus issue. We believe that the occupation must cease and that Cyprus must be reunited, but that full safeguards must be provided for the Turkish minority. The European Union negotiations can be helpful. Indeed, Cyprus's accession to the EU can provide a great opportunity to find a solution, and we should therefore proceed with it as determinedly and expeditiously as possible.

12.50 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): This has been all too short a debate on an important subject, but it has been thoughtful, informed and heartfelt, and the whole House owes a debt to my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who has rightly been steadfast in his determination to ensure that the House considers Cyprus on every possible occasion.

We have heard excellent speeches by my hon. Friends the Members for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) and for Finchley (Mr. Booth), and I know that my hon. Friends the Members for Cheadle (Mr. Day), for Wyre Forest (Mr. Coombs) and for Brentford and Isleworth (Mr. Deva) hoped to speak but could not do so because of the limited time. My hon. Friend the Member for Edmonton (Dr. Twinn) specifically told me that he would have liked to be here for the debate but, for other reasons, could not attend.

Of course my hon. Friend the Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household and my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Mr. Kirkhope), who is a Lord Commissioner to the Treasury, have also taken a keen

interest in the debate, although they could not participate in it. Many Opposition Members have taken an equally keen interest.

Of course it is right that our relations with Cyprus and the international efforts to resolve the Cyprus problem should be the regular focus of attention in the House. Cyprus matters to the United Kingdom, and to all of us. We have seen how, since the events of the 1960s and the estrangement of the two communities, mistrust has been allowed to fester and the unhappy situation has been allowed to ossify. As has been said before, nobody has won and everybody has lost by reason of the futile conflict.

The division of Cyprus has been damaging and wasteful. We cannot and do not accept that it should continue indefinitely; we must not and do not resign ourselves to the continued division of the island. A lasting settlement to the Cyprus problem cannot be based on division.

It therefore behoves us, and the international community, to do all that we can to help to resolve that most stubborn of problems. Ultimately, only the two Cypriot communities themselves can do that. But we can help and advise, and we can support, cajole and encourage. We can help the communities to see that with a settlement everybody will win, and nobody will lose.

United Nations Security Council resolution 939, passed in July 1994, called for fundamental and far-reaching reflection on ways of approaching the Cyprus problem in a manner that will yield results. In that context it also called for the earliest possible implementation of confidence-building measures—the proposals to bring life back to the ghost town of Varosha and to reopen the international airport at Nicosia under United Nations control.

The UN Secretary-General gave impetus to the first aspect of the Security Council resolution in October 1994, and invited the two community leaders to talks with his representative in Cyprus. We very much welcomed that as a chance for the two leaders to meet face to face and to get right down to business. Some positive aspects emerged from those contacts, but, sadly, in the end no progress resulted. It was an opportunity missed. Since then the UN has stayed active and has kept talking and encouraging the leaders towards a common perception of the kind of movement that is now needed for real progress to be made. Towards the end of last month representatives from both communities in Cyprus came to London to start another round of exploratory discussions. The talks, which were firmly within the framework of the UN process on Cyprus, were confidential and remain so, but their objective was simply to stoke up momentum for the UN efforts towards a settlement in Cyprus. There were, alas, no startling breakthroughs, but nobody has thrown in the towel. The Americans and ourselves will review the discussions with the leaders of the two communities in Cyprus and with the UN, and will consider with them how the process might now be taken forward.

It is clear that there has not been a period of idleness—not for us, not for the UN and not for the wider international community. We still intend to persevere in seeking a solution.

In another international context there has been a notable phase of activity on Cyprus which, it is probably fair to say, has yielded a greater sense of progress. I am referring to the application to join the European Union, which has already been mentioned in the debate. The Republic of Cyprus applied to join the EU in July 1990. The European Commission submitted its opinion on Cyprus's application in June 1993, and that opinion confirmed Cyprus's European identity and character, and its vocation to belong to the Community.

In Corfu in June 1994 the Heads of Government of the European Union agreed that Cyprus would be involved in the next stage of enlargement, and that was reaffirmed at the Essen European Council in December 1994. The Commission reviewed the question of Cyprus's accession to the EU in February, and the review confirmed Cyprus's suitability for accession and led to an important further step forward at the Foreign Affairs Council on 6 March.

The Foreign Affairs Council conclusions of 6 March first outlined the circumstances under which accession negotiations will start six months after the end of the 1996 intergovernmental conference. The Council called for progress in the intercommunal dispute, and noted that some useful points had been identified recently. It also stated that accession should benefit both communities in Cyprus. That all amounts to a significant step forward, which has rightly been welcomed by all member states and by the Cyprus Government. It marks further progress by Cyprus towards the objective of EU accession.

At the beginning of this week the decisions taken at the EU's Association Council with Cyprus set out a substantial pre-accession strategy with structured dialogue. So we can continue to make progress even before formal accession negotiations begin.

The conclusions acknowledged what we all wish to see—accession to the EU by a federal, bizonal, bicommunal Cyprus. We want the prospect of EU accession to make a positive contribution to the search for a solution in the island. The sequence that would make best sense, which I know many of us would like to see, is a settlement followed by accession. But let me make it clear to every Member of the House that no party should feel that that gives it a veto over the process. The aim is not to reward intransigence but to create incentives for progress and to ensure that there is real progress in the time scale set by the 6 March conclusions.

There was, however, another significant aspect to those conclusions. The Foreign Affairs Council also called for special attention to be paid to the particular social and economic conditions in northern Cyprus. It asked the Commission to develop a dialogue with the Turkish Cypriot community with the aim of clarifying its concerns about EU membership and considering how those could be dealt with.

We attach a lot of importance to that. We have made clear throughout our hope that the process of EU accession would contribute positively to the search for a solution to the Cyprus problem. Properly understood, the prospect of EU accession should provide additional incentives to both communities to reach a settlement. It is vital that the EU succeeds in assuring both communities that the terms of accession can enshrine and safeguard such a settlement rather than undermining it.

Our objective is to help to realise a workable and enduring settlement. We have no other aim, no hidden agenda. We have actively and wholeheartedly supported the UN Secretary-General and his mission on Cyprus. But, as has been said, we do have a special position, and

[Mr. Tony Baldry]

special responsibilities which we cannot and do not ignore. We are one of the guarantor powers. We have close links with both communities.

Our contribution has to be more than mere encouragement from the touchline. We are determined to play a full and active part in seeking a solution, and an intensive dialogue with both communities in Cyprus is energetically conducted by our high commissioner in Nicosia. I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley will confirm that the closest continuing daily interest is taken in finding out what part we can play in helping to solve the problems. Our role in facilitating the exploratory discussions is another proof of our commitment to progress on Cyprus within the UN framework.

We also need to keep in mind something that has so far not been mentioned today—the fact that there are 400 British soldiers in the UN peacekeeping force in Cyprus. They are there to sustain conditions in which a settlement can be pursued. Those United Kingdom troops are not in Cyprus to vitrify the status quo. The status quo is not acceptable.

Within the EU we have been at the forefront of activity over Cyprus. We are fully committed to developing the relationship between Cyprus and the EU, and I must make it clear that we welcome the prospect of Cyprus's eventual accession. That is what we are working towards. That is what we hope to achieve. In March this year, President Clerides singled out the United Kingdom among EU member states for our helpful contribution over Cyprus. We have been working hard on Cyprus's behalf and we intend to continue to do so.

The recent history of Cyprus is depressing. The present position is totally unsatisfactory, but recognition of that must spur us on to redouble our efforts. A solution can come about only through the consent and reconciliation of the two communities. Above all, that calls for a readiness on their part to negotiate constructively, positively and boldly. We must remain active in establishing a framework within which such a process can take place and in encouraging the necessary dialogue. The UK will remain at the forefront of those international efforts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Time is up.

Bristol Cancer Help Centre

1 pm

Ms Jean Corston (Bristol, East): I am grateful to have the opportunity to raise the subject of the Bristol cancer help centre and I thank my 73 parliamentary colleagues who have signed early-day motion 1203, standing in my name, on the subject of the centre's future.

The centre is a small Bristol charity. For several years, it developed an excellent reputation for the treatment of people with various types of cancer. It had a waiting list and worked in close co-operation with general practitioners.

It is extremely important to say that most people using the centre had already had what could be described as conventional or orthodox medical cancer treatment and that the treatment provided by the centre complemented rather than provided an alternative to conventional medicine.

The treatment offered by the centre included diet, which was approved by a national health service nutritionist, massage, meditation, group support and self-help. It could be summed up as an holistic approach to the treatment of and therapy for cancer. Some people have found such an approach missing in conventional treatment in the NHS and elsewhere.

In 1985, an agreement was reached that the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and Cancer Research Campaign would finance two research projects on breast cancer, to be conducted under the auspices of the Institute of Cancer Research. Two aspects were involved. The first involved the consideration of the survival rates of women attending the Bristol centre and the second an examination of quality of life comparisons between people who had been treated conventionally and those who had attended the Bristol centre with, or without, concurrent conventional treatment. Regrettably the second aspect—the quality of life survey—was never undertaken, but a protocol was agreed and among the signatories was Sir Walter Bodmer, the director general of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund.

The project was set up under the directorship of Professor Claire Chilvers. After two years of a five-year study, interim findings purported—I emphasise that—to show that

"women with breast cancer attending the Bristol cancer help centre fared worse than those receiving conventional treatment only".

The survey went on to say that women from Bristol were nearly three times as likely to relapse, and almost twice as likely to die as those having conventional treatment.

The survey gave death rate figures for Bristol attenders. It was significant, however, that it never gave any death rate figures for control subjects and that, to this day, has not done so. It also said that there was a causal relationship between attending the Bristol centre, developing secondary cancer and dying.

Those figures were immediately questioned by many people, including Professor Karol Sikora, a well-respected and internationally renowned oncologist, and the Cancer Research Campaign's press officer, who, I understand, has some scientific training. Astonishingly, however, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund decided to hold a press conference at its headquarters in Lincolns Inn Fields. It was organised by its press officer and chaired by one of its committee chairpersons.

The matter attracted huge publicity on or around 5 September 1990. I saw an item on it on the 6 o'clock news. It was before my election to the House. I had known of the work of the centre and I was utterly astonished to be told that women who went to Bristol were much more likely to die. One could only guess the effect that that would have on people who had had, or who were undergoing, treatment at the Bristol centre.

On 8 September 1990, an article was published in *The Lancet*. In that article, the possibility that the Bristol cancer help centre patients may have had worse diseases to begin with was virtually dismissed, and it said emphatically that Bristol patients "fare worse". The description of the methodology was not as rigorously comparative and the subsets of patients were not as clearly distinguished as they should in such a research paper. The article also gave little impression of the survey being an "interim" study.

Of course that article had a devastating effect on the centre's finances, reputation and future, on the people who had been treated there and, in particular, on those who had taken part in the research. One said on a recent "Taking Liberties" programme on BBC television that she awoke in the early hours of the next morning to find her 12-year-old daughter standing by her bed. When she asked her for an explanation, her daughter said, "They said on television last night you were going to die and I thought that I ought to be with you." In the succeeding months, that child needed counselling because she thought that her mother was going to die.

The centre had been refused a list of the women who had taken part in the study, so it could not contact them to alert them. It is important to stress that, of the 333 women in the Bristol study, 112 had attended the Bristol centre for only one day. These people were therefore saying, in effect, that if one went to the Bristol centre for one day, one was two or three times more likely to die of cancer. That beggars belief.

Professor Claire Chilvers said on television:

"People coming to Bristol should be extremely worried".

Professor McElwain said:

"Women who go to the Bristol centre relapse faster and die faster".

Up to a year later, such statements were being repeated by Professor Michael Baum, who said that women from Bristol died faster, and Gordon McVie of the Cancer Research Campaign, who said that Bristol patients fared worse.

In November 1990, within two months of that press conference, it became clear that the research was, to put it no stronger, flawed, if manipulated in other ways. A specialist said on the BBC television programme that the people conducting the research had, in effect, compared apples with pears as Bristol women were more ill when they went to the centre for therapy and treatment.

It was not possible to have a randomised control trial because women who attended the centre did not do so in the way people attend an oncology department or are referred to a hospital. It is not a random matter. There should have been a matched sample so that people were aware that like was being compared with like in terms of severity of illness and prognosis. Surely the level of mismatch alone in the sample should have been sufficient cause for withdrawal of the paper on scientific grounds, but it was not withdrawn.

[Ms Jean Corston]

There was a gradual realisation that the results were, in the Imperial Cancer Research Fund's own words, "wrong" and that "the results were invalid". Sir Walter Bodmer has said:

"The research suffered from a disastrous mistake in the interpretation."

That is surely a damning sentence from the director general of one of our most respected cancer charities. Sir Walter also said that it was not appropriate for a funding body to evaluate the research prior to publication.

Having signed a protocol, surely there is an obligation to have at least a proper and adequate period of review or some analysis of the figures before using them at a huge press conference with attendant publicity likely on national television and in all the newspapers—which is what happened. Some people in the medical scientific community will find it breathtaking that people signed a protocol and then said that there was no obligation to evaluate the research before publication. But the damage has been done. This research has never been retracted. No access has ever been allowed to the trial data: requests for such access have been refused.

There must be some sort of independent review of the trial data by a body such as the General Medical Council. The House should carefully consider referring this matter to the Select Committee on Health because a good deal of public money is involved and some patients from the control group are in Surrey and Sussex. They took part in the research in good faith and the research should be seen to have scientific integrity and to contain information on which we can rely.

In *The Times Higher Education Supplement* in 1993 Professor Garland, who is the chief executive of the Institute of Cancer Research, stated, albeit on a wholly different matter:

"If the damaging statements of a report are shown to be false, the longer they remain uncorrected the stronger the case that the authors are acting maliciously."

I agree absolutely with Professor Garland, who adequately sums up what many people consider to be the status of the interim and incorrect findings. The data were paid for by people who give to cancer charities, by those who shop in cancer charity shops, by the Government and therefore by the taxpayer.

At that stage the Bristol survey support group was set up. It consists of women who had treatment at the centre and who were outraged at the way in which the whole matter had been handled. It is a testimony to the empowering nature of the holistic approach pioneered at Bristol that those women were able to make contact with each other because there was no way that they could get access to names and addresses. They decided to do something about the matter and two women from that group are in the Public Gallery.

It is the first time in British medical research that a group of subjects have not only banded together but have demanded that the results of a study in which they were used be retracted. The members of the group subsequently took the Imperial Cancer Research Fund and the Cancer Research Campaign to the charity commissioners and won. The bodies were censured by the commissioners in January 1994 for inadequate supervision of the research, and the commissioners recommended guidelines on the responsibilities of charities that fund medical research.

There, in a way, the story rests but meanwhile the centre has funds to stay open only until September. Of course the flow of patients to the centre stopped completely because no reputable general practitioner could say to a patient, "Yes, I can unhesitatingly recommend the centre." They unhesitatingly recommended it before, but cannot do so now because of this puzzling research. Some patients decided to ignore the advice and continued to go to the centre, which is now attended by a reasonable number of people. It is often full but its funding has virtually dried up because people naturally took notice of what was being said by the reputable bodies which fund cancer research.

Although the centre has funds to stay open only until the autumn, the university of Bristol recently gave the centre accreditation to run courses for family doctors and other health professionals in the treatment of cancer patients.

I pay tribute to Bristol cancer help centre because I know people who have been there and they have said that it was the first time that they felt that they had some role to play in the treatment of their disease. They felt that they could take responsibility, be part of a decision process and could take steps to help themselves to get better. They found that it was possible to band together for mutual support and, in a sense, be given back some measure of responsibility for their own lives, mortality and future. I also pay tribute to the women's support group which has done a wonderful job in bringing the issue to public attention and in getting recognition for the inadequacy of the research.

I thank the BBC "Taking Liberties" television series which broadcast a programme on 23 May on the issue, entitled "Cancer Wars". In that programme there was a reference to the people who run cancer, as it were, the cancer barons, who saw themselves in charge and greatly resented what they saw as intervention from people who did not provide their kind of conventional, orthodox treatment. Of course it is easy for conventional therapists to dismiss people who practise complementary or alternative therapies as quacks and the like, but they must take note of the fact that, increasingly, people find efficacy in complementary therapies of which there is increasing use. Some 35 per cent. of GPs now want information on complementary therapies and would be happy to refer patients. A survey in 1994 showed that 67 per cent. of health authorities purchased complementary therapies.

Government support is needed to develop the Bristol model as a subject for research because the work of the Bristol centre is quite splendid. We must discover whether it is possible—I think that it is—to foster the integration of this kind of approach into mainstream health care. Its worth has been recognised by many people, including Professor Sikora, who visited the centre and said that it provided a holistic approach to the patient which he and his colleagues had not provided in the past. They had been treating the disease and not seeing the patient and his role in quite the way that they could have done.

A body such as the General Medical Council should rule on allegations of misconduct in scientific research, and that suggestion is separate from the issues of retraction, withdrawal and referral to the Select Committee on Health. This matter must be resolved. A few weeks ago at a conference in Switzerland somebody said, "Well, you know, the Bristol figures have been

called into question." That comment will be repeated until someone calls a halt and says that the figures were wrong. There is a terrible cover-up. People see the matter in terms of their personal or professional reputation, but there is a wider public interest and I hope that the House can address it. Stories based on that of David and Goliath do not always end with David winning, but this one certainly should.

1.19 pm

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): I rise to reply to the motion tabled by the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) on behalf of the Institute of Cancer Research, whose research facility is based in my constituency in Sutton, where it is linked to the Royal Marsden hospital. The institute is known worldwide and it has a reputation for excellence. It is appropriate, therefore, that I respond to the hon. Lady's remarks.

In the very brief time available, I want to tell the House that the institute feels that early-day motion 1203, on which this debate is based, is wrong in its view in almost every regard and is not founded on fact. If the House will permit me, I shall cite five reasons why it thinks that. The research was not invalidated by its methods. Such methods are widely used for evaluation of clinical outcome. Indeed, less rigorous methods have led to the much-praised Calman proposals to concentrate cancer care in specialist centres.

The researchers neither drew nor published unwarranted conclusions from their data. Their research is not invalidated by a subsequent correction. The outcome was broadly the same. There was no evidence that the Bristol centre therapy slowed or halted progress of breast cancer. The research at the institute was closely supervised. It neither started nor continued without expert and independent approval. Those who led the research were highly skilled and had excellent records. The report was offered for external and expert review prior to publication. It is interesting to note that no adverse comment was received.

The motion calls for the report to be withdrawn. None of the criteria for withdrawal of a research report is met; there is no proper reason to do so. Everyone in the House regrets that the Bristol patients were not informed of the results of the study before they were publicised. The Bristol centre—not the researchers—has taken responsibility for communication with its patients. It should be added that the centre had several weeks between receipt of the draft report and its publication, but the patients remained uninformed.

Ms Corston: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lady Olga Maitland *indicated assent.*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. I must point out that the minutes on the clock are moving on and the Minister is not going to be left with much time to reply to the debate.

Ms Corston *rose—*

Lady Olga Maitland: In that case, I do not wish to give way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, simply because time is so short. It is important to point out that the institute does not regard patients as pawns; they are regarded as people. That is why the institute staff conduct cancer research.

The early-day motion on which the debate is based is not only riddled with flaws, but inappropriate. The place to resolve doubt and uncertainty in science is not in this Chamber but in the practical arena among scientists, laboratories, clinics and experts. I trust that, in future, we leave serious scientific analysis to the experts—not to hon. Members in parliamentary debates.

1.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health (Mr. Tom Sackville): I thank the hon. Member for Bristol, East (Ms Corston) for initiating this debate. The subject of it is clearly of great concern to many people, not only to those in her constituency but to many people around the country. The hon. Lady may wish to know that my noble Friend Baroness Cumberlege will meet Lord Ashley and representatives of the centre on 19 June.

The Government very much appreciate that many patients derive benefit from the use of complementary therapies, such as those pioneered for cancer patients at the Bristol centre. Complementary therapies clearly can play a very important role in enhancing emotional, psychological and physical well-being. As with any other treatment, of course, the use of complementary medicine for patients with cancer is a matter for discussion between the individual patient and health care professionals.

Hon. Members may have seen an article in the *British Medical Journal* last year, which described a research project looking at the use of complementary therapies by people with cancer. That concluded that a sizeable proportion of people receiving conventional cancer treatments also used complementary therapies, from which they derived psychological benefits. I am pleased that the medical profession is increasingly acknowledging that an holistic approach to treating patients is appropriate. That is particularly important in treating a disease such as cancer, which is always frightening for patients and their families and for which conventional medicine often does not have the complete answer.

The holistic approach to cancer care taken by the Bristol cancer help centre, exploring the potential for healing through a variety of complementary therapies, is one way of addressing the needs of people living with cancer. It seeks to meet the needs of cancer patients—mostly women with breast cancer—and their families by offering to help with the physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological problems of people who have cancer. Of course we support those aims.

As always, we have a duty to protect the public from inappropriate or dangerous treatments and, indeed, from false hopes. All forms of health care must be subjected to rigorous evaluation and audit. Sometimes difficult judgments have to be made without as much evidence as we would like. The Department is funding a research project being carried out by the medical care research unit at Sheffield university into the impact within primary care that complementary therapists have on such things as patient satisfaction, hospital referrals, prescribing patterns and drug costs and repeat attendances.

Five years ago, as has been said, a group of cancer charities funded a research project to evaluate the effectiveness of the holistic regimes practised at the Bristol cancer help centre. This debate has discussed the publication of that research in 1990 and its conclusion that

[Mr. Tom Sackville]

women treated at the Bristol cancer help centre had poorer survival rates than those receiving only conventional treatments. I understand that it is possible that that research has contributed to the current financial problems facing the centre.

Following the conclusion, the Charity Commission set up an inquiry which showed that, although the arrangements by the charities concerned met a number of the requirements for the funding of research by charities, their procedures for the supervision of research and control of the results were not entirely satisfactory. That meant that charities could not be sure that charity funds were being properly applied in independent research. Recent media coverage focusing on the shortcomings of that research will doubtless affect public perception of the centre and attitudes to donations.

It is the responsibility of the whole medical research community and its sponsors—which include research councils, medical charities, Government Departments and industry—to ensure good practice in the conduct of research. The system operates on a largely self-regulatory basis through the principles of peer review and guidelines on good practice. Following the Charity Commission inquiry into the research of treatment and outcomes at the Bristol cancer help centre, the commission issued guidelines on 2 June 1994 which provide an agreed framework within which charities can operate when they support research. In addition, the Medical Research Council has recently set up a working group to re-examine the issue of good research practice.

Any retraction—mentioned several times in this debate—of the research study must remain for its authors, those bodies which funded it, and *The Lancet* in which the study was published. This is a professional matter and one in which the Department of Health has no jurisdiction.

It is of course open to the Bristol cancer help centre to seek funding support from health authorities whose patients are receiving care. If health authorities believe that complementary therapies such as those provided by the centre are safe, effective and of benefit to patients, they can use health authority funds to purchase them. It is, however, a matter for individual health authorities to decide, in the light of the needs of their local population and other health priorities.

I should add that the Government are committed to encouraging research into cancer. Priorities have recently been identified as part of the national health service research and development programme, which is expanding to take forward research in that and other areas. The Government do not, however, operate a research grants scheme that invites research applications in line with agreed priorities. Programmes of work are agreed following peer review. The programme of work in respect of priorities in cancer will be finalised shortly and further research applications may be invited at the end of this year.

I was aware of the Bristol cancer help centre and, some years ago, I read the "Bristol Diet" with great interest. I very much regret that these matters have arisen. I have no doubt that mistakes were made, which were aggravated further by some very sensational reporting of matters that are sensitive and should not have been entered into without full knowledge of the underlying facts.

Fire Services (Scarborough and Whitby)

1.29 pm

Mr. John Sykes (Scarborough): One of the topics with which I intend to deal is sparsity of funding for the county council's fire services and, judging by the sparsity of Members in the House, I have ample reason to address that topic.

This is something of a novel experience as I have never before applied for an Adjournment debate. I have come here straight from Room 11—fresh from the Dogs (Fouling of Land) Bill—and I hope that you will bring me back to order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I somewhat inadvertently refer to hon. Members as my honourable chum or my honourable pedigree chum, but I shall try to remain in order.

I decided that I would apply for an Adjournment debate only if there was an emergency in my constituency, and I fear that such an emergency has cropped up. Just over a year ago, at 2.30 am on 5 May 1994, a fire swept through the Richmond hotel, which is a Department of Social Security hostel in my constituency, killing a 20-month-old toddler, Terry Jones, and a 33-year-old girl, Katherine Harrison. The baby's four-year-old sister, Natasha, was left fighting for her life.

I received a letter at the time from one of the firemen involved, who said:

"I shall never forget the initial scene that greeted us when we arrived or the screams from so many people from windows and also from their friends already out on the street . . . it was my specific task . . . to enter the building and to search the locked rooms on the second and third floors for two people reported missing. It was a very long and difficult night, despite the many successful rescues and the mood back at the fire station was 'quiet' . . . you should know that our job (already very difficult and extremely dangerous that night) without the attendance of the Scarborough's retained firefighters, would have been almost impossible . . .

When I arrived home the following morning I was surprised to find that I was too upset for some time to tell Christine"—

his wife—

"what had happened. Stephen (my youngest son) was getting ready for school and the similarity with some of the children seen the night before was a distressing reminder. We're very fortunate . . .

This tragedy will no doubt add weight to your argument and of course anyone unfortunate enough to be residing in such places at least deserves to be protected properly. I was also heartened to see that the Prime Minister is willing to address the problem."

What the House does not know is that that fire station is directly opposite the Richmond hotel. How many others might have perished on that dreadful night but for that? I know that hon. Members will appreciate what a painful subject this is for us to deal with and will also be shocked when they hear that the county council wants to cut one fire engine from Scarborough, Whitby and Filey respectively, together with other cuts for north Yorkshire, which total about £178,000.

When most of my colleagues think of Scarborough and Whitby, they think of going on holiday there. Many of them will be surprised to hear that we have lots of other things to offer. There is a dynamic economy on that coastline. We have an amazingly vital manufacturing sector. Indeed, I have my own factory in Filey, which is not in my constituency—if we built an extension, it would probably be in my constituency. We also have an interesting fishing community and lots of farming. Thirty per cent. of the people who come to live in Scarborough retire there, so we have a large nursing home industry. We have 45 miles of the most beautiful, craggy, coastal scenery that one could imagine. Tiny villages such as Robin Hood's Bay, Runswick and Staithes shelter in the coves.

Then there is Whitby itself—England's finest and most unique town, surrounded on one side by thousands of square miles of open moorland, which sometimes catches fire, and thousands of square miles of sea on the other. If one sails out of Whitby harbour and looks back, one does not see much that one's 19th century counterpart would not have seen. The architects of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s have left it alone and it is still very much as it was. Along its ancient streets Tudor, Stuart and Georgian buildings—houses, shops and offices—are all packed tightly together, yet the county council wants to cut the number of fire engines.

In Scarborough, the pattern is repeated and a reliance on tourism is common to both Scarborough and Whitby. In summer, the population of Scarborough swells by 300,000—we have 1.5 million visitor days there every year. Visitors often come via the A64, which is clogged and choked, making rescue work very difficult for the fire services when they are called out.

In Scarborough and Whitby we also have DSS hostels, as we have heard. We should be very concerned about the fire risks in such hostels, as the Richmond hotel shows. The borough council is doing a sterling job within the limited powers that it already has to deal with the problem. We have 560 DSS hostels in Scarborough and Whitby, 86 of which have been inspected by the borough council, but only 17 were found to be satisfactory. Yet the county council wants to cut the number of fire engines in Scarborough and Whitby. We have a large and thriving population and it is a long way from other large and thriving populations.

I represent a coastal constituency. This afternoon, the House will turn its attention to the boundary commission. One of the advantages of having a coastal constituency is that the commission cannot do much with the right-hand side of it, but I suppose that I have lost so much of it to the North sea—including a famous hotel—that one might argue that an altogether higher authority was dealing with my boundaries. I am trying to illustrate a point because, if one lived in Huddersfield, one's house caught fire and the Huddersfield fire brigade was not as quick as it should have been, one would always have Halifax, Wakefield, Barnsley or Bradford to fall back on. According to the map, the nearest fire station in an easterly direction on which we can call is in Hamburg. That is why we need the extra fire stations in Scarborough and Whitby.

That brings me neatly to the question of sparsity because, as everyone knows, Yorkshire is England's biggest county and North Yorkshire county council, England's biggest council. The county has two population centres—York and Scarborough—and, in between, hundreds of tiny villages and hamlets, which stretch the county council's resources to the limit.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway) and I have repeatedly asked the Government to take sparsity into account. I am glad to be able to say that the Minister responded favourably by writing to me in March to say:

"The Government accepts that there should be a further review of the fire Standard Spending Assessment formula for 1996-97. The Home Office will be participating with the local authority associations in that review."

[Mr. John Sykes]

I am pleased to hear that news, but the sums involved in these cuts are paltry in comparison. They amount to £178,000, so why in the name of God does the county council seem so hell bent on pursuing cuts, when it knows that it might be pushing at an open door?

It may be relevant to point out that, in 1994, the public protection committee was faced with the self-same proposals and rejected them. It wrote that

"on the grounds of public safety, none of the reductions set out in Item 5 can be accepted and the Finance Sub-Committee be recommended to remove these items from the budget process entirely".

It continued, in defence of the very same retained crews for whom I am trying to fight today, to say that item 13—cutting back on those retained crews—

"cannot be accepted because if these appliances are removed the ability to meet attendance times and weight of attack would be seriously jeopardised when the Brigade is engaged in more than one incident at any one time, or when the Brigade is involved at a major incident which requires the mobilisation of many appliances".

The county council rejected those cuts on the ground of public safety in the previous financial year, yet 12 months later—after a disaster of national proportions in my constituency—the same council has stood on its head and changed its mind. It may be relevant to say that an election was held between those times, following which the Conservatives lost control of North Yorkshire county council. That is a matter for conjecture.

Mr. Hugh Bayley (York): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate on an important subject. People throughout north Yorkshire are concerned about the cuts to the fire service. Does the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that the Government have reduced the standard spending assessment for the fire service in north Yorkshire this year by £238,000? Does he accept that at the moment the county council spends £2 million more than its fire service SSA, which is the amount that the Government believe should be spent on the fire service?

Does the hon. Gentleman also accept that when the public protection committee considered the loss of the five fire appliances—including the two in his constituency—a proposal was placed before the council by Labour members that the cuts in the fire service should not reduce the number of appliances, but that the cut was voted through by Conservative and Liberal members of the county council?

Mr. Sykes: I do not accept that at all. The hon. Gentleman knows that the county council received a 1 per cent. increase in funding this year from the Government. He will have heard me say that the Under-Secretary of State has accepted our arguments about the importance of sparsity. I hope that more money will be made available. There has been cross-party support in Scarborough and Whitby for the argument, and no political point scoring has been carried out. I asked for today's debate as a Member of Parliament—not as a Conservative or Labour Member—because I am concerned about the issue.

I shall now address the question of the allocation of resources, and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman brought me to that point. It has been suggested that the Government did not give the county council enough money, and that that is the reason why the cuts proved necessary. The taxpayer subsidises the council to the tune of £290 million a year, with local ratepayers providing an extra £154 million a year.

I regard it as my job as the Member of Parliament for my constituency to try to make sure that we get a fair share of the national cake. I am glad that the Minister has accepted the arguments that my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale and I have put for more resources as a result of sparsity. But it is equally important for the county council to give a good account of its own spending. The council must be able to show that it has its priorities in the right order, and it is self-evident that the fire service is a priority of the first order.

As a business man, I know that a company that needs to make savings must first look at its head office costs and cut any unnecessary overheads. I took a look at North Yorkshire county council, which, for example, owns 13,000 acres of glorious north Yorkshire farmland. Has anyone in the county council asked himself what on earth the council is doing in 1995 owning 13,000 acres of farmland? More importantly, those acres are divided into 154 separate farms, which approximates about 84 acres apiece. That is almost French or German in its inefficiency, with regard to farming.

In business terms, the situation is worse. If the tenanted land was sold, it would raise about £10 million at today's prices, from which the council would receive an income of approximately £830,000 a year. That would be enough to pay for a whole fleet of fire engines year in, year out for every single village in the area.

I campaigned along with other people from Scarborough and Whitby—unsuccessfully, as it turned out—to get North Yorkshire county council to change its mind. The arguments raged backwards and forwards. I have said that the minimum standards are wholly inadequate, and I am sure that the hon. Member for York (Mr. Bayley) agrees. I live in Scalby, north of Scarborough. If my chimney caught fire and a fire engine got there within five minutes, that would be all right. But in the meantime, the Grand hotel or the Royal hotel could catch fire and burn to the ground. However, the minimum standards would still have been adhered to.

A document produced by the Audit Commission entitled "In the Line of Fire" addresses the minimum standards problem, and I hope that the Government will look closely at it. The report tells us that the majority of fatalities in fires occur in the category of property that is most predominant in my constituency. Yet we are faced today with applying the minimum standards in my constituency.

Why should we rely on Filey which, while it does very well, is also losing a tender? It takes 18 minutes to get from Filey to Scarborough—how many houses can burn down in 18 minutes? However, the county council still refuses to budge. Even the council's consultation period was odd. When similar proposals were put forward in 1990, the county council allowed three months to discuss the matter and consult the public. That did not happen this time. On this occasion, we were allowed four weeks for consultation during Christmas and new year, when most of us were at home with our families and most of the shops and businesses were closed. That consultation process was fundamentally flawed.

Whitby and Knaresborough town councils offered to raise the necessary funds themselves to pay for the fire engines, but still North Yorkshire county council refused

to budge. In fact, the council bent over backwards to find a reason not to allow that. The council's reply to Knaresborough town council was that the council should be thanked for its offer

"to pay North Yorkshire County Council an annual sum equivalent to the cost of providing and staffing the second fire engine . . . for operational, legal, financial and administrative reasons, it cannot be accepted."

That is gobbledegook, and the council is saying that it does not want to allow that to happen. We know that where there is a will, there is a way.

In the meantime, unknown to me and to the people of Scarborough and Whitby, the county council asked the fire officer of Scarborough to conduct a review of fire standard cover, which will be published in August. By that time—if the county council has got its way—it could be too late.

Liberal, Labour and Conservative councillors in Scarborough and Whitby and parish councillors have worked together with me to try to stop the arrangement in its tracks. The whole community has risen in support of the retained crews in relation to the threat that they face from Northallerton.

I have worked closely with those retained crews. I have attended fires with them, and spoken to their families. Without exception, every one of them is an honourable and decent person. They arrange their own lives so that they may save other people's lives, and it breaks my heart to see them sacrificed by the county council's brutal determination to throw them on the scrap heap and to score points. The council knows that the Home Office recognises that there may well be a need to put more money on the table in the weeks following this debate.

The council is playing with fire, the consequences of which could be injury or worse, such as another disaster like the one that occurred at the Richmond hotel. Those fire engines did not appear magically from nowhere. They have been there for a long time, and they were provided by the community because the community needed them. The community still needs them, and the community is entitled to be angry when dedicated firemen are chucked on the rubbish heap because the county council prefers to be a farmer, rather than a fire engine keeper.

1.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Nicholas Baker): It gives me great pleasure to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough (Mr. Sykes) on securing this debate on the fire service in Scarborough and Whitby. I understand the concern that he and his constituents feel about the quality of their fire service and that he expressed recently in a meeting with my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State. It is a sign of the seriousness of the issue for those in Scarborough and Whitby that this should be the first Adjournment debate raised by their Member of Parliament so ably and passionately. I extend my sympathy to all the victims of the tragic fire at the Richmond hotel, which he described.

The Government, like the general public, have a high regard for the fire service, its professionalism, the bravery of its firefighters and the quality of the service that it provides. In its recent report on value for money in the fire service, "In the Line of Fire", the Audit Commission noted:

"the fire service can be proud of its record in responding to incidents."

My hon. Friend referred to fire safety and in particular to the licensing of houses in multiple occupation. The Department of the Environment published a consultation paper on licensing houses in multiple occupation in November 1994. The responses to the consultation exercise have been considered carefully and the Government expect to publish their decision shortly in the housing White Paper.

My hon. Friend also referred to Government funding of local authorities and standard spending assessments. The local government finance settlement is realistic in the current economic climate, particularly when seen in the context of low inflation and the Government's view that pay increases in the public sector should be met from increased efficiency. It will also ensure that fire authorities contribute fairly to reducing public sector borrowing.

It is inevitable that updating the fire standard spending assessment formula means that some authorities will benefit at the expense of others. Although the fire element of North Yorkshire county council's standard spending assessment fell by 1.8 per cent. this year compared with last year, it benefited in 1994-95 by an increase of 7.2 per cent. However, with the Department of the Environment and the local authority associations, we shall look at the fire standard spending assessment formula again for next year, taking account of pensions, fire safety and other factors—my hon. Friend mentioned population density or sparsity—that the associations may wish to raise.

Before I deal specifically with the fire service in Scarborough and Whitby, it will be helpful if I explain the framework within which decisions about fire cover are taken. It is important to remember that the fire service is a local authority service. That has been the case since the Fire Services Act 1947 transferred firefighting functions from the wartime national fire service.

Mr. Bayley: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baker: I apologise, but I do not have time to give way.

Statutory responsibility for providing an effective and efficient fire service to meet all normal requirements rests with the local fire authority. It is for the fire authority—North Yorkshire county council in the case of Scarborough and Whitby—to decide how much of its overall budget to spend on its fire service in order to comply with its statutory responsibilities.

What, then, is the Government's role? My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has various duties under the Fire Services Act 1947: he monitors performance through Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services; he is responsible for promoting high and consistent standards in such matters as training, equipment, promotion and recruitment; and he can require collaboration between brigades and a combination of them if that would be more efficient. I might add that he will exercise those powers of combination to ensure that, from 1 April 1996, a combined fire authority comprising the new unitary council of the City of York and the remainder of North Yorkshire will maintain the existing brigade on its existing boundaries following local government reorganisation.

[Mr. Baker]

Under section 19 of the Fire Services Act, my right hon. and learned Friend is required to be notified of the fire authority's establishment—the number of its fire stations, fire appliances and firefighting posts—as at 1 January each year. It is particularly relevant to this debate that the fire authority may not reduce its establishment—although it can increase it—without his consent.

My right hon. and learned Friend has a specific and limited role in considering applications under section 19. He grants approval where the following conditions are satisfied: first, the proposals must have been sufficiently widely publicised, in sufficient detail and allowing adequate time, to enable any interested party to make representations; secondly, the representations must have been considered by the fire authority; and thirdly, after taking advice from Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services, my right hon. and learned Friend must be satisfied that the nationally recommended standards of fire cover will be maintained.

I emphasise that it is not my right hon. and learned Friend's role to decide whether the proposals that the fire authority puts forward represent the best option for making savings that the authority determines are necessary. Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services is available to advise the authority. Ultimately, however, primary responsibility for fire cover rests with the fire authority, which is accountable in law for the service that it provides.

On standards, the Fire Services Act does not define the test of an effective and efficient fire service, which a fire authority must provide to meet normal requirements for fire cover, but it is longstanding practice to interpret that by reference to the nationally recommended minimum standards of fire cover. Those standards are not just nationally recommended; they are nationally agreed in the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, which was established by the 1947 Act and on which the relevant fire service organisations are represented. They were also extensively reviewed by the Joint Committee on Standards of Fire Cover in 1985 for the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Councils for England and Wales and for Scotland. The standards enable all concerned to know where they stand as regards the minimum level of service that they should deliver. They also largely dictate the resources needed to meet those standards.

A recent Audit Commission report called for greater local flexibility in the application of the fire cover standards, particularly in A and C-risk areas. The commission did not say exactly how the standards should be changed and recognised that no change should be considered without careful research. The issue is being considered by the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council, but it is a complex matter on which much work will be needed.

Following the 1985 review of standards, all fire authorities in Great Britain reviewed their fire risk categorisation and the resources necessary to comply with the nationally recommended minimum standards. The authorities update those reviews regularly to take account of local circumstances. Each brigade is also inspected annually by Her Majesty's inspectorate of fire services. Following the inspection of the North Yorkshire brigade in 1993, Her Majesty's inspectorate recommended in its report that the brigade should give priority to its review of risk categorisation. That was again referred to in the 1994 inspection report as progress had been slower than expected. I understand that much of that work has now been completed and that the results of the full review are to be presented to the inspector during his inspection of the brigade in August. The inspectorate has a specific remit to look at resource allocation and identify under-provision relative to the national standards, and to ensure that any over-provision is identified to assist the fire authority to make informed decisions.

Scarborough is primarily a B-risk category area and there is little likelihood of that increasing to A-risk, the only category higher, which applies to the higher risks found in major city centres. The standard for B-risk areas says that, in normal circumstances, the brigade should be able to provide one pumping appliance to a fire within five minutes of a fire call and a second appliance within eight minutes. Cover is currently provided by two pumping appliances, a turntable ladder and rescue tender staffed by 72 whole-time firefighters and one pumping appliance staffed by 12 retained firefighters.

Whitby is predominantly a C-risk category area. That means that, in normal circumstances, one pumping appliance should be provided within eight to 10 minutes of a fire call. Cover is currently provided by one pumping appliance crewed by 12 whole-time personnel and one pumping appliance staffed by 12 retained firefighters.

North Yorkshire county council applied on 2 March, under section 19 of the 1947 Act, for the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State to reduce the establishment of its fire brigade. That included the removal of the pumping appliance staffed by retained firefighters and the 12 retained firefighter posts from Scarborough and from Whitby. My right hon. and learned Friend gave careful consideration to the application, noted that the authority had consulted extensively and considered the representations that had been received. The county council decided that the application should proceed after the representations to it had been considered.

My right hon. and learned Friend also took account of the representations that my hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and other people, including my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale (Mr. Greenway), made to him direct. He also received professional advice that Scarborough and Whitby had been correctly assessed for category of fire risk and that the authority could continue to meet the nationally recommended minimum standards if the reductions in establishment were made.

My right hon. and learned Friend was satisfied that all the criteria for a successful section 19 application had been met. There was, therefore, no justifiable basis for him to reject the county council's application.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. Time is up.

Stratford School

2 pm

Mr. Stephen Timms (Newham, North-East): I begin this debate about Stratford school by commending the Minister of State, Department for Education on his admirably frank statement last month about the problems at the school. The press notice issued by the Department for Education on 5 May 1995 said:

"The most recent report from Ofsted shows that standards of teaching and learning remain poor, that management is inadequate, and that the school has shown no signs of improvement since it was first found to be failing eighteen months ago. This persistent failure to provide an acceptable standard of education cannot be tolerated."

My purpose in initiating the debate is to ask the Minister to spell out a little further his plans for the school and the way in which he envisages the problems he has identified there being resolved. I do not intend to criticise people who work at the school or to add to the problems with which the pupils there must contend.

First, I shall review the history of Stratford school and identify the errors that have led to the current intolerable position. Stratford school is not in my constituency; it is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks), but I was the leader of the council in Newham when it was given permission to opt out, and since then I have followed developments at the school from a distance with mounting dismay.

The application for grant-maintained status at Stratford school arose from Newham council's reorganisation proposals. The pattern of demand for secondary school places in Newham had changed and, by the late 1980s, it was necessary to provide new places for the developing docklands part of the borough. The Department for Education made it clear that it would support the changes that were needed only if the council was to close a school. After a long and difficult exercise in the borough, it was decided that the least bad option was to close Stratford school.

Initially, when the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) was Minister of State, the Government said that they would support that plan. They continued to do so when there was a rather half-hearted application for grant-maintained status on behalf of the school. A ballot of parents in September 1989 rejected opting out, but in a re-run in March 1990 there was a small majority in favour.

In the summer of 1990, there was a ministerial reshuffle. It was reported widely that the then Prime Minister was anxious that there should be more opt-outs—that the rate of opting out should be increased. The right hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar) was appointed Minister of State in July 1990. After a few days in the job, he announced that he was minded to support the Stratford opt-out.

As I mentioned, I was leader of the council, and I quickly visited the Minister to explain why the council opposed the application. I argued that it undermined the reorganisation plan that had been painstakingly assembled in co-operation with the Government, although I knew that that consideration alone was unlikely to sway him.

I also drew attention to the specific local problems that dogged the Stratford proposal: the fact that the vast majority of the staff intended to leave if the opt-out went ahead, the fact that the governors objected to the opt-out and, most alarmingly from my perspective, the unstable collection of irreconcilable factions and personalities that had coalesced to support the Stratford bid. The problems that were likely to arise were crystal clear, and I spelt them out to the Minister then.

Given that the Minister had been sent in to boost the number of opt-outs, he presumably felt that he had a dilemma. He consulted other Conservative party supporters on what he should do, and I know that at least one of them confirmed to him that the warnings that I had sounded were correct. As the council's formal letter of objection put it in May 1990:

"the group supporting this proposal has not thought beyond saving the school from closure and does not have any awareness of the responsibilities that running such a school would entail. In such circumstances the lack of viability of this project must be questioned still further."

The council challenged the opt-out at the High Court in December 1990. In an affidavit submitted by officials at the Department for Education, the danger of a staff exodus on opt-out, which subsequently did take place, was freely admitted but, in a striking sentence, the affidavit remarked, "Only time will tell," as indeed it has done.

The Minister knew all about the strife ahead before he allowed the project to proceed. It is a tragedy for the pupils of that school that he subjugated their interests to what he perceived to be his own interests. The life chances of dozens of Newham youngsters have been irreparably damaged as a consequence.

What followed exceeded in awfulness even what had been predicted. The agony of the school was played out night after night on the television news in early 1992.

"Race row head is back"

announced *The Mail on Sunday* on 12 January 1992, after the Secretary of State had had to step in after the governors suspended the head, but after that matters became worse.

"Appeal by Minister after police are called to crisis-torn school"

reported *The Daily Telegraph* on 8 February 1992.

"The school riven by hatred"

said *The Evening Standard* on 12 February 1992.

"An object lesson in discord"

said *The Times* on 24 February 1992, and

"Savage war of the governors"

said *The Evening Standard* on 25 February 1992.

It is hard to imagine what it must have been like for staff and pupils in the school during that time. In summer 1993, the school achieved the worst examination results in the whole of London, and in November 1993 it was declared a failing school.

I am angry that the Minister's predecessor used the children at that school for what he believed would be the narrow interests of the Conservative party. The impression that that was what that was all about was absurdly emphasised when, after the 1992 general election, Mr. Mark Prisk, the unsuccessful young Conservative candidate for Newham, North-West, was appointed as chair of governors at the school. He apparently had no qualifications for the job or previous connections with the district. He was a presentable young man. It was presumably intimated to him that a grateful party would bear his service in mind at future parliamentary selection conferences.

[Mr. Stephen Timms]

One cannot help but feel sorry for Mr. Prisk as he struggled to sort out the problems, but the problems required more than ambitious youthful enthusiasm. Mr. Prisk resigned from the governing body last month, but he cannot be blamed for his failure to resolve the problems.

That was one of the most disgraceful episodes in the sorry saga, and it is no way to run our education system. Schools cannot be treated as party political playthings. Young people in Newham have been the victims. That is why I am angry.

However, all that is in the past. The question now is, how can the standards of education being received by the children at Stratford school be improved? I welcome the fresh approach that the Minister has revealed, with the frankness of his statement last month. I am delighted with the progress that is being made with the desperately needed schools in Newham's docklands district, which led to the original closure plan at Stratford. We have been grateful for the efforts of the Minister of State on our behalf. There is real optimism in Newham that those matters are now being dealt with on their merits.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): As my hon. Friend knows, and as the House knows, I represent the part of docklands in Newham, which is three miles long and one mile wide, isolated between the A13 Newham way and the river. We have no secondary school in that district, but there are 12 primary schools. I made representations to the now right hon. Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar). He wrote to me on 13 December 1990, saying:

"Finally, may I say that the decision to accord grant-maintained status to Stratford School took no account whatsoever of what may or may not ultimately be needed in the Docklands development area. The two issues are totally unrelated."

Unfortunately, he did not stick to that, but the two issues are related and I know that the Minister knows so, too.

Mr. Timms: I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention. He points out correctly that the delays in providing much-needed schools in the south of the borough are undoubtedly related to the fact that the closure was not permitted to go ahead.

Last month, the Minister announced that he intended to appoint four new governors to Stratford school, and I had the opportunity to meet one of them on Monday. I hope that that initiative succeeds, but I think that the Minister will understand if I am a little sceptical. Appointing very distinguished additional governors to Stratford school in the past has not solved its problems.

Setting that history aside, I believe the problem now is that the school does not have access to support that would allow its difficulties to be addressed. Stratford was the first school in Newham to be deemed a failing school, but it will not be the last. Serious shortcomings in particular schools have been identified in the past and those problems were addressed by support and advice from the local authority which worked alongside school staff. That approach proved extremely successful in one case that I remember well and the school's achievements improved markedly and rapidly.

However, Stratford does not have access to that sort of support from a local authority or from anywhere else. Sending in extra governors may help—I hope that it does—but the staff of the school need local support also. It is a reflection on the school's isolation locally that neither my hon. Friends and I nor the local authority know who the governors are. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) tabled a parliamentary question inquiring who the governors were and he was referred to the school. However, the chair of the council's education committee wrote to the school in the middle of last month to ask who the governors were and has not yet received a reply.

Some observers have suggested that the best way to proceed would be for the Department for Education to hand the school back to the local education authority. As pupil places in Newham schools are filled, it is now much less likely that the borough will be able to manage without the teaching capacity of Stratford as it intended to do in 1990. The council is reviewing how it would proceed if the school's status were to change. However, I gather that in law it would not be possible simply to hand the school back to the local authority. I ask the Minister to comment specifically on that point when he responds to the debate.

This appears to leave closure as the only option under Government policy if there is no improvement by autumn. Last month's Government press notice showed that failing schools should improve substantially or close within two years—which, in this case, would be in November this year. Will the Minister confirm whether that is the timetable he has in mind and, if it is, how he envisages negotiating with the local authority on the provision of alternative places for the pupils affected? When will the closure occur? November is not too far away and I suspect that we would need more time to prepare if it were decided that the school should close.

The history of Stratford school is very unhappy. The former Minister of State made an error of judgment. However, it is now in everyone's best interests to resolve uncertainty about the school's future as soon as possible. The standards of education received by the children at Stratford school must be improved as quickly as possible. I believe that all hon. Members share and support those objectives.

2.12 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) on raising the subject of Stratford school. It shows that Newham Members of Parliament hunt in a pack on this and all other issues. The problems in the school do not affect only the Member of Parliament in whose constituency it is located. Stratford school is located in my constituency, although it is not actually in Stratford but in Forest Gate, where I live.

It is somewhat disturbing that, to try to revive its flagging fortunes, the school has begun to put flyers through letter boxes in its locality suggesting that people might like to send their children to the school. That seems a rather unhappy situation, as my hon. Friend said.

My hon. Friends and I enjoyed very good relations with Stratford school, before it was given grant-maintained status. I would like to restore those good relations between the local Members of Parliament and the school. I recently received a letter from Mrs. Snelling, the head teacher at Stratford school, who said that it was a pity that I had not visited the school in four years. I wrote back to her and said that, unfortunately, I had not been invited to visit the

school—I do not visit schools unless I am invited to do so. I suspect that my hon. Friends and I will now be invited to visit the school to have discussions with Mrs. Snelling.

My hon. Friend has put the situation very succinctly. I attended the first meeting with the then Minister of State, the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold), and it was clear from that meeting that the right hon. Member agreed that it would be quite wrong to use an application for GM status as a way of avoiding closure as part of an integrated reorganisation of education. We were worried that there might be a knock-on effect to Sarah Bonnell's and other schools north of the A13 which would be asked by the Government to reduce the number of student places.

It is sometimes very satisfying to get to one's feet in this place and say, "I told you so." This is not one of those occasions. We have told Ministers in the past that we are prepared to sit down and discuss the matter quietly and coherently. We do not want Stratford school to be used as a political football. I hope that the Minister will respond to the overtures by the Newham Members of Parliament in the genuine and sincere manner in which they were offered.

2.15 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Education (Mr. Eric Forth): The hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms) has done everyone, not least the school, a service by raising this subject today and allowing the House to consider it. I welcome the constructive nature of the latter part of his remarks. We all agree that we must be satisfied with the quality of education provided at Stratford school and we must ensure that it will provide pupils with every opportunity for the future. That fact is unarguable.

In that context, I was a little disappointed that the hon. Gentleman devoted the early part of his speech to raking over the ashes of the school's history. He referred to some admittedly very unpleasant conflicts. I cannot see how it will help the school to rehearse those events at this stage, but that is a matter for the hon. Gentleman to decide. There may be many things wrong with the school today, but I do not think that the racial disharmony and conflict between the governors and others to which he referred are among those problems. The governors, the staff and the pupils of Stratford school have put that behind them and they are determined to see the school progress and improve, if that is possible.

As to the criticisms levelled against my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), I remind the House and the hon. Gentleman that my right hon. Friend did not and could not have forced the school to adopt grant-maintained status. The parents at the school voted in favour of grant-maintained status, as the hon. Gentleman admitted, and they did so before my right hon. Friend was appointed as an Education Minister. As Minister, he had to decide between the wishes of the parents as expressed in a ballot and the local authority's plans. My right hon. Friend decided in favour of the parents, which forced the council to rethink its plans.

In that context, I make it clear that schools are not run for the benefit of local authorities; they are run for the benefit of pupils and are accountable to the pupils' parents. The ballot for grant-maintained status provides parents with an opportunity to express their opinions. The parents of Stratford school decided that their children's educational interests would be best served if the school left the local authority's control. I can appreciate how it would hurt municipal pride if a majority of parents were to take that sort of decision, and it may also reflect badly on the authority; but we can hardly pretend that, at the time, the local authority concerned was a by-word for efficiency and high-quality service, even though for many years it had received more funding per pupil through the local authority finance system than most other local education authorities in England.

I think that the hon. Gentleman implied that all would have been well if the school had remained within the aegis of the local authority. I doubt that. He went on to argue that Stratford school should be returned to the control of the local authority, and I shall return to that point later if I have time. The truth is that other local authority schools in Newham have problems of their own, and one school not far from Stratford has worse GCSE results if one compares the A to G scores. The hon. Gentleman's comment that Stratford probably would not be the last failing school in the area suggests that all is not well even with the schools under the local authority's control. To argue that, if the school had remained with the authority, the general quality of education and other things somehow would have been better is difficult to support with the facts.

Mr. Timms: My point was that, with local authority schools, it has been possible to provide support to help them recover. That has happened in the past, but it has not yet happened at Stratford. We are anxious that it should.

Mr. Forth: It can and will happen. It has already been happening, but has come from sources other than the local authority. Of course, in recognition of their independent status, grant-maintained schools have been given additional money—we will all wait breathlessly until next week to see whether the Labour party will erode that. On this occasion it could be used to purchase support. Support in the education sense cannot come only from local authorities. It can and does increasingly come from other sources and I, for one, welcome that. To suggest that GM schools are cut from all support is not true.

I turn now to the specific questions that the hon. Gentleman asked about the school and its future. He brought to the attention of the House the fact that I have made it clear that the school's current performance is not acceptable. That, I think, is clear to all.

The inspection report two years ago made depressing reading. It may not have been the worst that we have seen, but it was pretty damning. The standards of achievement in a significant number of subjects were unsatisfactory. The curriculum was not well planned or delivered. GCSE results were poor. Provision for bilingual pupils was inadequate. In the view of the inspectors, resources were not used effectively. It is, of course, a disappointment for me and my colleagues and others to hear that said of a GM school. However, for this purpose, the fact that that school is grant-maintained is of no significance whatsoever.

It says a lot, however, for the autonomy of the chief inspector and the independence of the inspection system that such things can and will continue to be said where necessary of schools that are failing their pupils. That

[Mr. Forth]

alone is a great advance on the position not that many years ago when no one dared to publish a school inspector's report.

Since June 1994, the Office for Standards in Education has visited the school termly to verify progress or otherwise. Overall, standards have improved little. Limited progress has been made towards implementing the governors' action plan for turning the school around. The last visit still found the quality of teaching deficient in two out of every five lessons. That is not to say that there are no bright spots. There is good work in some subjects. For example, the school won a technology schools initiative grant of £300,000 in 1993. However, overall, there has been little improvement.

The problem that is emerging is that we are finding that all failing schools have in common at least two weaknesses that can be readily identified: the quality of leadership and quality of teaching. In some cases, there can be pupil behaviour problems because misbehaviour can obstruct teaching or a significant pupil absence dimension.

The inspectors at Stratford school found that the pupil behaviour was courteous and polite and that attendance was generally excellent. When the inspectorate writes of poor teaching, it describes teaching that is poorly planned, that does not address the full range of pupil ability in the class, that may not challenge and stretch pupils' ability and that does not record what pupils have learned and use it to plan future teaching.

Poor leadership and management in failing schools mean that senior management is not exercising control over standards or providing the direction and guidance that teaching staff need to improve. On this point, the Ofsted record of its last visit to Stratford makes predictably depressing reading.

"The governors and senior managers have not developed a long-term—three to five year—view of the school. The review of the action plan has not clarified the long-term targets to improve the quality of education provided at Stratford School. The governors and senior managers have not taken sufficient notice of the progress made to inform decisions about future strategies."

The hon. Gentleman argued that a GM school does not have the support and resources available to other schools. I have already referred to that point and given my response to it.

I want to come straight to the point that the hon. Gentleman very reasonably made about the new governing body. He said that he had not been provided with a list of governors. In defence of my Department, if I need to defend it, I should say that we cannot maintain up-to-date lists of every governor at the more than 1,000 grant-maintained schools. However, I would equally say that grant-maintained schools should provide lists of governors to anyone who asks for them, especially to a local Member of Parliament.

I take this opportunity to give the names. We are rather proud of the governing body as it stands now and have high expectations for and hopes of it. As parent governors, we have Mrs. Bailey, Mr. Sagoo, Mrs. Hemming, Mr. Christian and Ms Campbell and, as teacher governors, Mr. Heales and Ms Earnshaw. There is also the head teacher herself, Mrs. Anne Snelling, to whom reference has already been made.

As first governors, we have Mr. Umer, Mr. Swallow, Mr. Newman and Mr. Hopper. Four new governors were appointed in May, to whom the hon. Gentleman referred. Three of them are additional first governors: Dr. Peter Osborne, former head teacher of Shenfield GM school; Mrs. Joan Greenfield, ex-chief education officer of Hillingdon; and Mrs. Pat Collarbone, head teacher at Haggerston school. I am sure that the hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson), with his educational experience, will be happy to hear those names. I am sure that he shares my confidence that they will contribute to the school's improvement.

In addition, Mr. Paul Lewis, deputy chairman of Tate and Lyle, has been appointed as an additional governor by the Secretary of State, alongside Mrs. Daphne Gould, who continues to serve in that capacity. A governing body of that experience, power and authority will give the school every opportunity of improving in a way that perhaps it was not able to do before.

The remodelled governing body is now chaired by an impressive parent governor, Mrs. Merinda Bailey, who has already, I believe, taken an energetic grip on a difficult task at a most crucial time. I invited Mrs. Bailey and the head teacher, Mrs. Snelling, to see me to discuss the school's future. I made it clear that I expected to see significant signs of improvement in the standards of education by the time of Ofsted's autumn monitoring visit.

After that, there was a full briefing by my officials in the Department and Ofsted for governors at the school, which went over the original inspection report and subsequent monitoring report in some detail, explained the legal framework that governs schools under special measures and outlined the financial framework within which a school in Stratford's position operates.

The answer to the question that the hon. Gentleman very reasonably asked about the time scale is that we will expect the school to have demonstrated a significant improvement in its standards by the latish autumn. If that cannot be demonstrated, we will be faced with a very difficult decision and it is possible—I say no more than that at this stage—that the decision will be made that the school should close.

However, that would only initiate a procedure that would take a considerable time, because closure of a school is a serious business and it would require extensive consultations under the statutory framework and require the local education authority to be brought in. We would have to satisfy ourselves that sufficient places were available to accommodate the pupils displaced if the school were closed and that an acceptable quality of education was provided for them.

The point of the exercise is to identify schools that are failing their pupils and to give them an opportunity to improve the quality of provision. Ultimately, if that cannot be done, it might be a question of closing the school—something that we have not yet had to do—provided that suitable alternative provision can be made within an acceptable time scale. In this case, the process would not be sudden, like falling off a cliff, and the usual consultation would be undertaken.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether the school could be returned to the control of Newham council rather than closed. I confirm that the law does not allow that. It would be a rather odd suggestion because, as he said, the council itself originally wanted to close the school. Moreover, in

the current circumstances, I do not think that the authority's record with its schools is such as to inspire enough confidence in us to make us want to rush to return the school to the authority. That is not the route to take.

I firmly believe that the changes that we have made, especially to the governing body, will produce results. Support is on offer, based on the additional moneys available to Stratford grant-maintained school, as to any other. I have made it very clear to the chairman of the governors and the head teacher in particular that significant improvements must be made within a given time scale, because I cannot accept that pupils should continue to be let down by the school as, regrettably, they have been for so long. That combination of factors now gives us real hope that the school can be improved and turned around quickly.

I make it equally clear, however, and confirm that we may have to contemplate closure of the school in the interests of the pupils. We are all agreed that we must be prepared to act in the interests of the pupils and to put all other considerations—disappointment, pride or anything else—behind us. We must face the possibility of closure.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East for bringing this matter to the House's attention. I hope that I have been able to answer his questions and that, with the co-operation of all the local Members of Parliament, we can see something happen to the school which, regrettably, has not happened for many years.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment of the House lapsed, pursuant to Order [19 December].

Oral Answers to Questions

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Newspaper Carriage Charges

1. **Mr. Spellar:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with representatives of newsagents regarding carriage charges by wholesalers. [26803]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs (Mr. Jonathan Evans): My officials met representatives of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents on 8 June regarding recent increases in wholesalers' carriage charges.

Mr. Spellar: I am sorry that the Minister is not able to be more forthcoming about the welcome meeting that he held with newsagents. Does he accept their enormous importance to the thousands of shopping parades across the country? Does he also accept that the recent dramatic increase in carriage charges is crippling many newsagents? Are not the magazine and newspaper publishers trying to recoup the cost of the price war by trying to extract more profit from newsagents? What exactly does the Minister intend to do about that?

Mr. Evans: There is not a Member of the House who does not recognise the important role played by small newsagents in every constituency. I have spoken to representatives of the profession in my constituency about the current difficulties caused by carriage charges. However, the hon. Gentleman ought to know that the Director General of Fair Trading has a responsibility placed on him by the Fair Trading Act 1973 to keep these matters under constant review. I have ensured that the director general is fully apprised of all the concerns outlined by representatives of the industry and by Members of Parliament.

Mr. Leigh: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend the Minister has just said. Will he confirm that the Office of Fair Trading should monitor the charges? Does he accept that, since the report by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission in 1993 and the changes in distribution arrangements mentioned by the hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Spellar), there has been not just a considerable increase but in some cases charges have doubled or even quadrupled, putting the survival of many newsagents on the line?

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There is widespread concern about carriage charges. I am bound to say that it is not in the interests of the publishers to see small newsagents in such difficulties because it is retail newsagents who are responsible for fixed deliveries and it is fixed deliveries which set the advertising rates that publishers are able to charge. In those circumstances, the entire industry has a responsibility to ensure that the problem is dealt with. I am aware that discussions are taking place between the National Federation of Retail Newsagents and publishers with a view to resolving the problem.

Mr. Bell: It took a question from the hon. Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh) to puncture the Minister's complacency. The Minister should be aware that small newsagents are going to the wall. Many are going bankrupt because of the changes to which the hon. Gentleman referred. It is not good enough for the Minister merely to say that he has met newsagents or to refer to the Office of Fair Trading. If there has been one report from the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, should there not be another?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman should know that delivery mechanisms were the subject of the MMC inquiry in 1993. On that occasion, there were no adverse findings. I am well aware of the concerns raised recently as to whether the position has been changed by the events outlined in representations to hon. Members and to me. As the hon. Gentleman has had so much to say about the operation of competition policy, he should know that a responsibility is placed upon the Director General of Fair Trading to keep matters under review and all those representations have been drawn to his attention. I have no doubt that he will also be receiving representations from the hon. Gentleman, given the force of the hon. Gentleman's remarks.

Mr. Hawkins: Does my hon. Friend accept that certain parts of the country such as my constituency and the north-west have been particularly badly affected by the problem? The National Federation of Retail Newsagents has drawn attention to particular difficulties in the north-west. In addition to his helpful comments this afternoon, will my hon. Friend ensure that the Director General of Fair Trading is made fully aware of the particular problems faced by newsagents in the north-west and in constituencies such as mine in that regard?

Mr. Evans: I can certainly give my hon. Friend that assurance. For the benefit of the considerable number of hon. Members who have written to me, I should couple with that assurance the information that, as I have made clear in my responses, full details of the concerns outlined have been passed to the Director General of Fair Trading. In my judgment, publishers and wholesalers must recognise the particular role of retail newsagents. I am at least reassured by the information that discussions within the industry are now taking place. It is a complex industry and in the circumstances all the relevant parts of the industry are interdependent and interrelated. Further discussions between relevant parts of the industry cannot come too soon.

Indonesia

2. **Mr. Corbyn:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what restrictions are placed on trade with Indonesia. [26804]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology (Mr. Ian Taylor): Trade with Indonesia is subject to the normal requirements of United Kingdom law. There is no European Union or United Nations embargo on arms trade with Indonesia.

Mr. Corbyn: Despite the lack of an embargo by anyone else, does the Minister agree that it is incumbent on the British Government to recognise that the illegal occupation of East Timor has led to the deaths of up to 200,000 East Timorese people, that young East Timorese are being sentenced to up to three years' imprisonment for taking part in peaceful demonstrations and that journalists in Jakarta and other cities who attempt to

expose the facts are being given prison sentences merely for trying to speak the truth? Should not the British Government stand up against such a monstrous regime and put a total embargo on all arms sales to that country?

Mr. Taylor: The hon. Gentleman has made allegations in relation to East Timor which are not upheld in United Nations policies. Although the United Kingdom has not recognised the annexation of East Timor, we are relying on dialogue which is continuing at the moment under the auspices of the United Nations Secretary-General. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman belongs to a party which, like the Conservative party, supports the activities of the United Nations. Why, therefore, does he not observe the rules and regulations that the United Nations itself observes? There are no United Nations embargoes on arms sales to Indonesia. That is recognised internationally and it is recognised by the Government in dealing with any export licence applications.

Mr. Nicholls: Is it not interesting that Labour Members were prepared to junket around the former Soviet satellites in eastern Europe without mentioning anything about illegal occupation or the abuse of human rights which occurred there on a vastly greater scale than anything in Indonesia, yet they are prepared to malign and traduce a country that most of them could not find on a map if they were asked to do so?

Mr. Taylor: I should not like to comment on the geographical knowledge of Labour Members, but the abuse of human rights anywhere in the world is appalling and one cannot be selective about it, as the Labour party attempts to be, as between those friends whom they cuddle up to and those they do not.

Mrs. Clwyd: If the Minister is found to be at fault in his judgment that the Indonesian Government will not use equipment exported from Britain with licences granted by his Department, will there be a resignation in the Department?

Mr. Taylor: I am slightly puzzled by the hon. Lady's question, given that the Labour party is in favour of selling arms. If the Opposition are not in favour of selling arms, that would make for an interesting statement by a Front-Bench spokesman as it would threaten hundreds of thousands of jobs in this country.

The Government's attitude is to take careful note of the situation in any country to which we are selling arms, and of any undertakings given by the Government of that country. In the event of a change, the position on export licences would immediately be put under review.

East Midlands (Exports)

3. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what his Department is doing to promote exports from the east midlands. [26805]

The Minister for Trade (Mr. Richard Needham): My Department provides an increasingly comprehensive range of services to all sectors of industry in the east midlands. The improved services are delivered more and more through the rapidly expanding network of business links.

Mr. Garnier: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the business link office in Market Harborough, which has been up and running since January, has already achieved great things for exporters in the east midlands? Would he care to comment on co-operation between his Department and the Foreign Office to achieve even greater exports, not just from my constituency but from the whole country?

Mr. Needham: My hon. and learned Friend is absolutely right to draw attention to the success of the business links and to the Government's export strategy. We recently announced in the competitiveness White Paper that we shall have 30,000 more companies exporting by the year 2000. We are finding £40 million worth of additional funding; we are holding more exhibitions and conducting more missions; there are more posts and more professional, better trained staff. We have more business links, more co-operation between business and Government, more information technology and more exports. The only thing that could possibly ruin it all would be the Labour party.

Mr. Tipping: Is the Minister aware of the participation today of civic leaders from the east midlands in promoting their document, "Give Us A Sporting Chance"? Will he look closely at that document, which sets out a number of recommendations for promoting the textile and clothing industry, especially its desire to export more?

Mr. Needham: Of course.

Privatised Utilities

4. **Mr. Harry Greenway:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his estimate of the changes in productivity achieved in the privatised utilities since privatisation; and if he will make a statement. [26806]

The Minister for Industry and Energy (Mr. Tim Eggar): Generally, the privatised utilities have demonstrated higher productivity increases than those of manufacturing industry as a whole. The productivity performance of the electricity industry and of BT is particularly impressive. In terms of annual averages between privatisation and 1993-94, the regional electricity companies' productivity was up 6 per cent., BT's up 7 per cent., PowerGen's up 15.5 per cent., and National Power's was up by nearly 21 per cent.

Mr. Greenway: Does my right hon. Friend accept that no one has questioned Cedric Brown, Iain Vallance and company harder than I have about their salaries and emoluments? Does not the fact that footballers are being paid £15,000 a week put the envy expressed by the Labour party and the Liberal Democrats into perspective? The reductions in the price of gas, telephone calls and electricity are what matters—not the sneering, envy and meanness expressed by the Opposition.

Mr. Eggar: As usual, my hon. Friend makes his point powerfully and effectively. BT's prices for domestic consumers have fallen in real terms by 35 per cent. since privatisation. Gas prices for domestic consumers are down in real terms by 21 per cent. Electricity prices have fallen by 8.5 per cent. over two years. Gas prices for industry are down by almost 40 per cent. in real terms, and in recent weeks there has been a fall of no less than 20 per cent. in interruptible gas prices, over and above last year. That is a record of which the privatised industries can rightly be proud.

Mr. Pike: Does the Minister accept that the privatised utilities are obsessed with getting rid of jobs and employees in order to make a profit? Last year, when

BT's system was affected by thunderstorms, the company did not have enough workers to get the system working again and had to bring in engineers from the Republic of Ireland. Is that not nonsensical?

Mr. Eggar: The hon. Gentleman lives in another era. He forgets the time when there was a waiting list for telephones and there was only one kind to be had—a big black one. During that period there was nothing like the number of telephones in houses compared with nowadays and the standard of efficiency was unbelievable compared with the present high standard. I suggest that the hon. Gentleman should assess the evidence objectively.

Mr. Quentin Davies: Although the Labour party does not want to acknowledge it, an amazing number of privatised industries have become international leaders in their sectors, setting the pace in profits, productivity and growth. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is the position with British Airways, British Steel, British Gas and British Telecom, and is that not the finest vindication of the correctness of Conservative privatisation policies?

Mr. Eggar: I completely agree with my hon. Friend. Anyone who has seen, as I have, British Gas operating in Argentina or Kazakhstan will recognise the major contribution that British Gas is making to economic growth in those countries and in bringing profits back to the United Kingdom. We must recognise that the sale of services by utilities in the energy and telecommunications sectors is a worldwide effort, not a domestic effort within the United Kingdom. Our former state-owned utilities are leading the way for Britain. That means good profits and jobs for Britain.

Mr. O'Neill: Does the Minister agree that the ability of directors of former public utilities to earn football players' wages, or to win them, is not related to their ability to score own goals? Will the right hon. Gentleman comment on today's statement by the Centre for Regulated Industry that profits of £4,553 million were made in 1993-94 in the former public utility sector? Indeed, profits rose by about 14.3 per cent. What does the right hon. Gentleman suggest should be done to give some consolation to the consumers of electricity, for example? Does he agree that the regulator should give greater countenance and support to the other stakeholders—the consumers? A 14.3 per cent. rise in profits is nothing compared with price controls. Surely the regulator should be defending the consumers rather than the shareholders.

Mr. Eggar: Even by the hon. Gentleman's standards, that was a particularly churlish question. The benefits of privatisation have flowed through directly to consumers in lower prices in virtually all the privatised industries, and in higher standards of performance and service to consumers. The hon. Gentleman and the newspapers seem to have ignored the fact that the statement made by the centre that he mentioned referred to results for the year before last.

Export Trends

5. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is his Department's latest estimate of the trend in exports in 1995. [26807]

Mr. Needham: The outlook for exports in 1995 is excellent. The Confederation of British Industry reports that export orders are growing faster than ever before and that optimism among exporters is at its highest for a generation.

Mr. Marshall: I thank my right hon. Friend for that encouraging answer. Does he agree that while past economic recoveries have been based on increased consumption leading to a balance of payments crisis, the present recovery is based on increased exports, which means that we can look forward to several years of sustained economic growth?

Mr. Needham: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. At Question Time two years ago, the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook) constantly told the House that as we came out of recession into recovery our export position would get ever worse and the deficit would become ever greater. Perhaps that is why the Leader of the Opposition was sensible enough to move him to another shadow position. We are going through one of the greatest export booms of the century, which will bring untold benefits for the British people. Provided that the Conservative Government stay in office, there is no conceivable reason why that should not continue.

Mr. McAvoy: The Minister will be aware that Hoover Floorcare in my constituency is the only floor care manufacturer in Hoover Europe. He will also recognise Hoover Floorcare's record of exports to Europe. Bearing in mind the fact that the Italian company, Candy, has made a takeover bid for Hoover's European interests and that the bid, if successful, would represent a fresh and, I hope, new start for Hoover employees in the United Kingdom, will the Minister give an assurance that despite the remits of the Welsh and Scottish Offices in the takeover bid, his Department will encourage the bid to give fresh hope to Hoover employees?

Mr. Needham: I am interested in what the hon. Gentleman says, although he gave me no warning of his question. It is interesting that in this case he wants to see a takeover go ahead when his colleagues are so often against takeovers. The real question that he should address is whether the balance of British manufacturing is becoming more world competitive and improving the opportunities for Britain. In 1979, for example, machinery and transport equipment accounted for 34 per cent. of exports. Now it is 41 per cent. [HON. MEMBERS: "Here we go."] Here we go, indeed—it is a success story for British manufacturing and the Opposition should support the Government and industry on that.

Industrial Job Creation

6. **Mr. Riddick:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps his Department is taking to encourage job creation in the industrial sector. [26808]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Industry and Energy (Mr. Richard Page): Jobs are dependent on the competitiveness of the wealth-creating sector. The steps that the Government are taking to promote competitiveness are set out in the recent White Paper, "Competitiveness: Forging Ahead".

The success of our policies is clear. Unemployment fell further today—the 21st fall in a row. Nearly two thirds of a million people have left the register since December 1992, total employment has risen substantially over the past year and manufacturing employment is up by 31,000.

Mr. Riddick: Will my hon. Friend welcome the fact that in May unemployment fell not only throughout the country but in Colne Valley? Is he aware that manufacturing industry is extremely important in and around my constituency and that the key factor in increasing employment in the industrial sector is to maintain and improve competitiveness? Towards that end, will he confirm that the Government will have nothing whatever to do with Labour's twin job destroyers, the social chapter and a national minimum wage?

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend makes the point about the social chapter in a powerful and sensible fashion. Unemployment in the United Kingdom has fallen over the years, thanks not only to the Government but to the Prime Minister in obtaining the opt-out from the social chapter. My hon. Friend and the House may be interested to know that in the United Kingdom since 1993 unemployment has fallen from 10.3 per cent. to 8.6 per cent. while in the European Union it has risen from 10.7 per cent. to 11 per cent., in France it has risen from 11.7 per cent. to 12.2 per cent., and in Germany it has risen from 6.1 per cent. to 6.8 per cent. It is a matter of amazement to me that the Labour party wishes to embrace the social chapter and throw hundreds of thousands of workers on to the scrap heap.

Mrs. Dunwoody: I am sure that we are all grateful to the Minister for that lesson in what happens to those who are not party to the exchange rate mechanism. What message does he have for the railway manufacturing industry in this country, which is increasingly being forced into bankruptcy, not because it is not capable of producing jobs and manufactured goods but because the Government, in the total chaos of railway privatisation, have left it with empty order books and a large number of jobs at risk?

Mr. Page: As the hon. Lady knows, the matter of placing orders for the railway industry is the responsibility of British Rail and not the Government. Whenever Governments have tried to interfere in the purchasing process, they have usually made a complete and utter mess of it. I need only cite the National Enterprise Board and the chaos and confusion when the Labour Government tried to run various bits of the industry.

Mr. Tredinnick: Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most impressive examples of job creation is in Hinckley, in my constituency, where the motor cycle plant is exporting 10,000 motor cycles a year? Is he aware that Triumph is No. 2 in the league in Great Britain and expects to increase its exports by 60 per cent. next year?

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend tells us a success story. It is an amazing fact that Opposition Members always try to condemn success stories. I am surprised that they do not talk more about the success of the Invest in Britain Bureau. I am sure that the right hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair), for example, is delighted that Black and Decker has brought 300 jobs to his constituency, and no doubt the hon. Member for Blyth Valley (Mr. Campbell) is happy that CMC has brought 550 jobs to his constituency. I look across the Chamber and see the hon. Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham), to whose constituency the Koyo Bearings factory, which I visited the other day, has brought an extra 200 jobs. Then I look at the hon. Member for Wallasey (Ms Eagle), in whose constituency Bristol-Myers Squibb has created 161 jobs. I could go on for hours with the list of successes whereby in the years since 1979 a total of 700,000 extra jobs have been brought to this country. That is a success story.

Political Donations

7. **Mr. Chisholm:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will amend the Companies Act 1985 to ensure that information on political donations given by companies is made available to customers of the privatised utilities. [26809]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I have no such plans. Customers of privatised utilities can readily obtain information on any political donations through disclosure in the companies' annual reports.

Mr. Chisholm: Why should shareholders in privatised utilities be told about political donations when customers, who have to foot the bill, are not? As the Conservative party has sanctioned the windfall profits and share option bonanzas of the utilities, surely the public should be told which companies have returned the favour.

Mr. Evans: In a sense the question is disingenuous, because when information on a company's political donations is disclosed in its annual report it is invariably disseminated in the newspapers. Furthermore, I note that the hon. Gentleman is the only one of the top 10 Labour Members in the draw to ask questions who is not sponsored by the co-operative or trade union movement—unlike the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who is sponsored by the GMB. Mr. John Edmonds of the GMB has said that he intends to challenge political donations: he apparently believes that they are unlawful because they do not buy political influence—unlike donations to the Labour party.

Mr. Jessel: Is not the word "utility" misleading, in that it seems to imply that if something has come along a pipe or a wire it must be more useful than a physical article or object bought in a shop? Is that not a nonsensical distinction? Why should someone who has bought a fluid or a gas which has come along a pipe be privy to more information than someone who has bought a physical object in a shop?

Mr. Evans: My esteemed and honourable Friend highlights the fact that what is important is the efficiency of the service delivered.

Mr. Nigel Griffiths: How does the Minister justify the fact that utilities such as Thames Water can give £50,000 to the Conservative party by taking the money from senior citizens such as Thomas Monaghan, a military cross holder, who was charged £193 for the changing of a washer? Will the Minister hold an inquiry into that scandal and ensure that Mr. Monaghan and others know that money is being taken away from them to give to the Conservative party?

Mr. Evans: As the hon. Gentleman seems to have no difficulty in finding out what political donations particular

companies make, why does he want to place a charge on every customer of every privatised utility by requiring the information to be sent to them?

Deregulation Initiatives

8. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the importance of deregulation initiatives in increasing the competitiveness of industry in the United Kingdom. [26810]

The President of the Board of Trade and Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. Michael Heseltine): As we made clear in our second White Paper on competitiveness, deregulation is central to improving United Kingdom competitiveness. Unnecessary requirements stand in the way of market entry, innovation, investment and jobs. We have a programme of repealing or amending more than 1,000 regulations and we are on target to deliver nearly 500 by the end of the year. We are also taking action to ensure that regulations are enforced in a business-friendly way.

Mr. Spring: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the immense frustration in commerce and industry caused by the over-zealous application of red tape and regulations? In view of his considerable success in setting up one-stop shops, does he envisage the provision of specific help in providing advice and expediting the appeals procedures, which would be a great morale boost for the business sector?

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend raises a most important matter. We are exploring the opportunity to improve the appeals mechanism and, with the business links, we are exploring the possibility of introducing a single point of access to information about the regulatory system.

Dr. John Cunningham: If the right hon. Gentleman's ideas and policies are so effective, why is it that, under the Conservatives, Britain has fallen to the bottom of the league of Group of Seven—the largest industrial economies in the world? As he is talking about competitiveness and always lauds privatisation, how does he explain that, in the past five years, increases in British Gas's productivity have averaged only 0.42 per cent. but that, at the same time, increases in the chief executive's salary have averaged 27 per cent.? How does he reconcile those things?

Mr. Heseltine: What the right hon. Gentleman fails to point out is the reduction in prices that have taken place over that period as a result of the improved management that has been brought to that industry. Consumers have gained—that should be attractive to Labour Members.

Sir Peter Hordern: On the question of deregulation, does my right hon. Friend accept that there is increasing evidence that when directives issued from Brussels are translated into statutory instruments, they become far more comprehensive, and that such directives are given different interpretations in different countries in the European Union? Will he therefore consider appointing an independent commission to consider carefully the way in which those directives are interpreted not only in this country, but in other EU countries?

Mr. Heseltine: My right hon. Friend raises an important issue. We addressed precisely that dimension of the European single market implementation programme when we invited Lord Sainsbury to set up task forces to consider our implementation of the directives. I am pleased to give the House an assurance that, if any evidence of over-zealous implementation were put before me, I would consider it most carefully.

Competition Law

9. **Mr. Cousins:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade to what extent United Kingdom competition law is in accordance with the terms of articles 85 and 86 of the treaty of Rome; and if he will make a statement. [26811]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Articles 85 and 86 apply to agreements and practices that may affect trade between member states. Member states are free to apply national competition law within their own jurisdiction. UK competition law is different in approach from EC law but both share similar objectives in seeking to ensure that competition operates effectively throughout the economy.

Mr. Cousins: Does the Minister not know that this country has no law outlawing fixed markets and cosy cartels, even when factories lie idle? We have no better example of that than Tyneside's Swan Hunter shipyard, which is virtually closed. No British company wanted to touch it. A Dutch company has bought it and its other north-eastern operation has been sold to another Dutch company. We have two new enterprises in our region. That is an example of real competition. When will the Minister crack open the cartels, under which far too much of British industry shelters?

Mr. Evans: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman did not begin his remarks by welcoming the news on Swan Hunter. That news has been welcomed on Tyneside and, at least, by Conservative Members. On his criticisms concerning the operation of domestic competition policy, the Government have made it clear that we are committed to legislate to improve the operation of the law on restrictive trade practices. It would be right to say, however, that the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 introduced a number of changes which the Government had announced at the end of the consultation in 1993, and of which the Director General of Fair Trading is now taking advantage.

Mr. Fabricant: Does my hon. Friend agree that some countries in Europe are still in breach of those regulations? For example, France continues to subsidise Air France and Spain continues to subsidise Iberia. Is he aware that France-Télécom and the Bundespost still operate non-tariff trade barriers? Does he agree that Britain, with its veto, still has a strong bargaining card in the courts of Europe and that the Labour party would throw away that veto and any influence that we have in Europe?

Mr. Evans: My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology continually battles in Europe on the matters that my hon. Friend outlined. We could seek no better champion.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: A moment ago, the Minister spoke about the Director General of Fair Trading, Sir Bryan Carsberg. Does he agree with Sir Bryan that Britain was in the lead in competition policy in the mid-1970s but has now fallen behind?

Mr. Evans: No, I do not agree with the views of Sir Bryan, who subsequently left as director general.

Mr. Geoffrey Preston currently operates in that function. Sir Bryan has argued that there should be a diminished role for Ministers in terms of the operation of competition policy. I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman subscribes to that view but it would not command universal support in the House.

Directors' Fees and Dividends

10. **Mr. David Evans:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to limit the ability of companies to set directors' fees and dividends. [26812]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Directors' salaries and remuneration packages are matters for individual companies and their shareholders. It is not the Government's policy to intervene in such decisions.

Mr. David Evans: I thank my hon. Friend the Minister for his reply. The lot opposite want to introduce the social chapter and a minimum wage and want to control directors' pay. Is that not a way of having a pay policy, a policy which failed so miserably in the late 1970s? Does my hon. Friend think that it is a bit rich that the leader of that lot opposite accepts £79,000 from three LWT directors who earned their fortunes from share option schemes? He got the leadership and his pay went up by 125 per cent. Is that the new caring, sharing Labour party, with one rule for them and one rule for us?

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I share my hon. Friend's views but I bemoan the fact that I do not possess his eloquence in putting them forward.

Mr. Harvey: In the context of the monopoly utilities, is it not the case that setting top pay on the basis of profits and share price gives top executives a direct incentive to charge the maximum price that the regulator will allow? Until those industries become fully competitive, would it not be better for shareholders to approve pay packages on the basis of a broader measure of performance which would include customer satisfaction, lower prices and environmental protection, to name but three? Will the Government consider bringing in an index of those wider measures, which customers could look at, perhaps as part of the citizens charter initiative?

Mr. Evans: I do not think that there is a role for Government in operating the sort of function outlined by the hon. Gentleman. The Government have always made it clear that salaries and remuneration are matters for shareholders. That was my original reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Welwyn Hatfield (Mr. Evans).

Mr. Dover: Does the Minister agree that such matters are far better left to the directors of a company? Does he also agree that, under the Cadbury code, it is for the remuneration committee to see to matters such as directors' fees and top executives' salaries?

Mr. Evans: It seems that that view is shared not only by many Conservative Members but, according to the *Financial Times*, by the right hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham), who apparently recently met Sir Richard Greenbury and Mr. Tim Melville-Ross of the Institute of Directors and assured them that Labour's new buzz words were co-operation, partnership and consensus and that its guiding principle will be minimalist intervention.

Ms Eagle: The Minister's statements on this matter are contradicted by the Prime Minister, who said that he would be willing to think about legislation if those excesses carried on and if Greenbury recommended it. Does the Minister realise that he is putting his career at risk by disagreeing with his own Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box?

Mr. Evans: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for showing such concern about my ministerial career. I shall outline the Government's policy in relation to Greenbury, which is quite clear. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has made it clear that he will await the Greenbury committee's recommendations and that the Government are ready to consider any proposals that Sir Richard Greenbury thinks may need legislative back-up.

Review of Public Expenditure

11. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade who in his Department is responsible for the Government's fundamental review of public expenditure; and if he will make a statement. [26813]

Mr. Heseltine: I am. All aspects of the Department's expenditure are reviewed annually.

Mr. Jenkin: I am grateful to hear that my right hon. Friend is in charge of the fundamental review of public expenditure in his Department. That is not the case in some Departments, which have left officials in charge of this important task. Does he agree that the recovery in the economy and the export boom that we are enjoying are the results of our firm control of public expenditure? That is in contrast to the Labour party, whose every word shows that it would increase public expenditure and taxation and put the recovery at risk.

Mr. Heseltine: My hon. Friend is right. I am amazed that he did not add the social chapter and the minimum wage to the catalogue of disasters that a Labour Government would herald for this country.

Dr. John Cunningham: On the matter of public expenditure, what are the President's relations these days with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, who is responsible for scrutinising public expenditure? Yesterday, the President effectively announced two inquiries—neither of them independent, I regret to say. The first is to be carried out by Customs and Excise. He encouraged the Select Committee on Trade and Industry to embark on the other, by saying that his Department would co-operate in any such inquiry. As those inquiries will implicate his right hon. Friend in the shambles and fiasco over BMARC, how can the President maintain a sensible working relationship with him?

Mr. Heseltine: I deeply regret that the right hon. Gentleman made that intervention. If he looks carefully at the words that he has used, he will find that he has no grounds on which to base what he has just said. My relationship with my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary to the Treasury is as good and as excellent now as it has always been.

Mr. Congdon: Given that the most successful economies are low-tax economies, will my right hon. Friend do everything that he can to reduce public expenditure?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. Maintenance of the continued improvement in the economic fortunes of our country is certainly high on the Government's list of priorities, and that requires tight control of public expenditure.

Business Links

12. **Mr. Purchase:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent consideration he has made of the financing of business links; and if he will make a statement. [26814]

Mr. Heseltine: Business links have been assured of on-going funding from my Department for the delivery of counselling and business support services. They are also financed by partner contributions and by charging for services. Last months's competitiveness White Paper confirmed the Government's intention to fund the development of business links for a three-year period. Beyond that, the Government will continue to contribute funding to business link services on a three-year rolling programme, subject to evaluation.

Mr. Purchase: Is the President aware that a recent article in the *Financial Times* suggested that the funding for business links was not as secure as we have been led to believe? The President knows that there is all-party support for the concept and work of business links. Indeed, in my authority, a steering committee is ready to move forward to set up business links, a move about which I am very pleased. Can I take a message back to my authority that the funding for business links is assured and that it can look forward to increased prosperity as a result?

Mr. Heseltine: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for taking the matter with the seriousness that it deserves. To qualify for the franchise, business links have to put forward a business plan, for which they are responsible, for appropriate national examination. That includes a business plan of how they are to fund their activities, taking into account the support which the Government will provide and their ability to raise funds from other sources, including charges. That is the responsibility of individual business links. We have given a commitment to an on-going three-year programme and, beyond that, to fund the specific services that the Government have suggested, such as technology counsellors and export and design advisers.

Mr. Forman: Is my right hon. Friend aware that his answers will be very welcome to the small business community in my constituency? Will he see to it that his words are widely publicised in such groups as the Carshalton and Wallington business group and others which are committed to the contribution that small businesses can make, especially to new employment?

Mr. Heseltine: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend. The fact is that 103 business links are now open in 39 areas and outline plans for another 142 have been approved in a further 30 areas. I have every confidence that the target that we set of 200 business links by the end of the year will be achieved.

Payment of Bills

13. **Mr. Cummings:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will estimate the amount of money owed by his Department to suppliers in 1993 and 1994 which remained unpaid after 30 days from the presentation of invoice. [26815]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Department does not keep estimates of amounts outstanding. The percentage of invoices paid, within either 30 days or the agreed credit period, was 90 per cent. in 1993-94. On more rigorous Treasury guidelines, the figure for 1994-95 was 84 per cent. The target for 1995-96 is 95 per cent. and payment procedures are being improved, where necessary, to achieve this.

Mr. Cummings: That was a rather disappointing reply. Does the Minister agree with the former consumer affairs Minister, Baroness Denton, that when goods are supplied and not paid for, it is basically theft? Does he also agree with the colleague who stated in a Department of Trade and Industry press release that people who are owed money should contact the chairmen of the respective offending companies, even at home, and go along and collect the money? If that is the case, can we look forward to the Minister's home number being made public?

Mr. Taylor: If it helps the hon. Gentleman, he can have my Internet number as well. The Department did not do very well in 1994-95. We need to pull up our socks, which is what I said in my answer. We are targeting 95 per cent. payment and have put the systems in place. In a recent meeting with the CBI in the north-east, we learnt that it was aware that some of the targets that we had set ourselves in the competitiveness White Paper were extremely welcome. The CBI is working on further information. The question whether the law should come into it is highly contested, even among smaller businesses. We have to find a way to shame people into making payments. The Government do not want to be shamed and will, therefore, be a good payer.

Mr. Wilkinson: Is not late payment of invoices one of the prime causes of the failure of small businesses? Is it not welcome that the Department recognises the importance of the DTI setting a lead in the matter? Can the Minister move his target onward to 99 or 100 per cent. at the earliest possible date?

Mr. Taylor: Targets are set and then need to be beaten. I agree with my hon. Friend that, if one sets a target of 95 per cent. and achieves it, one then needs to do better. The problem of late payment is complicated. Many surveys show that too many companies rely on trade credit, so the question is one of the overall financing of many of our companies rather than of late payment, which is often due to the failure to agree clear contractual terms between two commercial parties. Government Departments must set an example and do better and the targets set by the DTI should be emulated throughout Government.

National Consumer Council

14. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further discussions he has had with the National Consumer Council of the impact on the service that it provides of the reduction in its budget since 1993. [26817]

15. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what further discussions his Department

has had with the National Consumer Council on the reduction in its service following his budget cuts. [26818]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: My Department is in frequent contact with the National Consumer Council and has regular discussions on all issues of mutual interest, including the council's work programme and budget.

Mr. Jones: Does the Minister think that, by cutting the budget of the National Consumer Council, he will stifle its criticisms of the Government's policy? What message does he think that that will give to British consumers?

Mr. Evans: I do not believe that. The purpose of the decision made in 1993 to reduce funding by about 25 per cent. in three years is to help the National Consumer Council to develop a more focused approach to its work. The hon. Gentleman needs to recognise that, until that time, the council had had an 80 per cent. real terms increase in its grant. In the changing circumstances, the time had clearly arrived for a more focused approach on its part. I am pleased to see that that is being adopted.

Mr. Griffiths: The Minister referred to the ups and downs of the financing of the National Consumer Council. Is he aware, for example, that in that more focused approach to which he referred, housing and education matters have been dropped from the council's inspections? Does he think that that is a retrograde step? If the Government's finances get better, will he commit himself to restoring the funds cut from its budget?

Mr. Evans: The Government are committed to assisting the National Consumer Council to develop a focused approach. I said earlier that the announcement made in 1993 followed a period in which the amount of grant made available increased by 80 per cent. in real terms. Ninety-one per cent. of the spending of the NCC is grant in aid from the Government, and it is our view that an additional proportion of funding could come from other sources. That is another part of the approach that the Government have adopted. In developing negotiations with the NCC, the Government announced an additional grant of £291,897 at the end of last year to ease the process of transition.

West Midlands

16. **Mr. Turner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many manufacturing companies existed in the west midlands in 1979; and how many of these were trading in 1993. [26819]

Mr. Page: VAT-registered businesses in the production sector, which includes manufacturing, mining, quarrying and public utilities in the west midlands region, increased from 14,445 in 1979 to 17,579 at the end of 1993.

Mr. Turner: How does the volume of output in 1979 compare with that in 1993, and what was the value of that output? May I remind the Minister that, between 1980 and 1983, we saw the destruction of manufacturing industry in the west midlands, when one third of capacity was lost? That was due to the calamitous policies of Lord Howe, who should be tried for industrial treason.

Mr. Page: There is no doubt that the productivity, output and exports of this country are all increasing. It is all good news, and the only thing that is going down is unemployment. I am surprised that the hon. Gentleman did not refer to the fact that his constituency was changed from intermediate to assisted area status in 1993. Regional selective assistance produced some £6.5 million, leading to £65 million being invested in his area. Companies such as Sun Valley Foods, Canon Processing Equipment and Bilstone and Battersea Enamels are all creating and safeguarding more than 1,000 jobs in the hon. Gentleman's constituency. Why is he not grateful?

Mr. Anthony Coombs: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the Engineering Employers Federation has issued figures which show that £160 billion worth of goods have been sold by the engineering industry in the past year, that exports since 1980 have doubled and that manufacturing output is at a near-record level for the engineering industry? Do not those statistics compare significantly with the efforts of the previous Labour Government, when manufacturing output fell?

Mr. Page: I can only agree with my hon. Friend. It is significant that the amount of employment in manufacturing has gone up by 31,000 in the past year. It is interesting to note that unemployment in the west midlands is now 8.4 per cent. That is lower than the national average, and it is dropping quicker than the national average.

Madam Speaker: Mr. Andrew Faulds.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Faulds: Louder, louder!

Some of my older colleagues—there are a few left—may remember that when Baroness Thatcher first stood at that Dispatch Box in 1979, I warned that she would create of Britain a disaster area. Where could that be truer than in the west midlands?

Mr. Page: Unfortunately, while the hon. Gentleman's rhetoric is strong, his facts are remarkably weak.

Utility Standing Charges

19. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will initiate a full investigation into the standing charges on domestic gas, electricity and telephone accounts; and if he will make a statement. [26823]

Mr. Page: Standing charges are a matter for the utilities and their regulators.

Mr. O'Brien: Because of the evidence now available that the abolition of standing charges will reduce the average domestic gas bill by 3 per cent. and the average electricity bill by 6 per cent., and given that many pensioners and people on low incomes would welcome a reduction in their bills after the imposition of VAT last year, will the Minister influence the regulators to justify, qualify and investigate standing charges for all the utilities—electricity, gas, water and telephones?

Mr. Page: While the hon. Gentleman makes his point, I must draw to the House's attention the fact that standing charges are a fair way to recover fixed charges such as meter readings, administration and emergency services. As my right hon. and hon. Friends have already pointed out, consumers can take comfort from the fact that gas

prices have fallen in real terms by 23 per cent., BT's main prices have fallen by 35 per cent. and electricity prices have fallen by 8.5 per cent. That is real help to the consumer.

The answer to the hon. Gentleman's question whether I would be prepared to influence the regulators is: absolutely not. The regulators' independence is their strength.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does my hon. Friend agree that standing charges have fallen, as a number of companies have announced reductions? Will he confirm that there is nothing new about standing charges, which have been around since before 1979? The Opposition say that they should be abolished. Their hypocrisy is there for everyone to see.

Mr. Page: My hon. Friend is right. Since 1993, MANWEB has abolished its standing charges. While the future players in the gas market have not yet revealed their strategies, I have no doubt that they will consider reducing or abolishing standing charges once the Gas Bill is enacted.

Sizewell B

20. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the total cost to public funds, including the costs of the public inquiry, for the construction of Sizewell B. [26824]

Mr. Page: Sizewell B has cost about £2.5 billion to construct. The costs of the public inquiry completed in 1985 and attributed to the then Department of Energy, or recoverable from the Central Electricity Generating Board, totalled some £2.5 million.

Mr. Skinner: That is a lot of money to pay out for the production of nuclear power. The Minister says nothing about the £1.3 billion given annually to the nuclear power industry as a straight subsidy. Will he confirm that, with the construction of Sizewell C at a cost of a further £4 billion, the price of electricity will be 3.7p per kWh, which is far in excess of anything that could be produced by coal-powered stations using British coal? Does it not make a nonsense and scandal of the fact that while British miners have been sacked and thrown on the dole—31,000 of them recently—by the President of the Board of Trade, the Government with their crazy economics will subsidise nuclear power to the hilt?

Mr. Page: The hon. Gentleman might imagine himself as some latter-day knight defending the coal industry that was—

Mr. Skinner: A trusty shield.

Mr. Page:—but the Government are not prepared to pour money down the throat of the coal industry to produce not cheap but expensive electricity to the detriment of UK Ltd. My right hon. Friend's statement and the debate in the House on the privatisation of the nuclear industry made it perfectly clear what we would do. The privatisation of the nuclear industry is nothing new. We have had a privatisation policy since 1970 and it has produced significant benefits for the British people. It might be interesting for the House to note that before those state industries were privatised, they cost £50 million a week, which came from the taxpayer's pocket. They now contribute £50 million a week to the Treasury.

Newspaper Carriage Charges

21. **Mr. Mullin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has received from independent newsagents about carriage charges; and if he will make a statement. [26826]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I have received a substantial number of letters, as I informed the House earlier, following a campaign by the National Federation of Retail Newsagents concerning increasing wholesalers' carriage charges.

Mr. Mullin: Given the Government's professed concern for the welfare of small business men, why will they not stick up for the newsagents against the arrogance of those near-monopoly distribution companies? If the Conservative party is the party of competition, should it not be fighting for the newsagents, not for the near-monopoly distribution companies, which are extremely arrogant and abuse their power daily?

Mr. Evans: The hon. Gentleman should know that the role performed by the small retail newsagent is recognised and well understood by Conservative Members. We also recognise the anxieties that have been expressed by many people in the industry about increasing wholesale charges.

As I said earlier, it is important that all sections of the industry—publishers, wholesalers and newsagents—get together to resolve that difficulty. It is certainly not in the interests of the publishers for the position of the small retail newsagent to be damaged, because half the fixed sales of newspapers are undertaken through the delivery mechanisms of small retail newsagents, and advertising revenue is fixed on that basis.

In those circumstances, it is important that that dialogue takes place. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that Mr. Frost of the National Federation of Retail Newsagents has informed me that part of that dialogue is already taking place.

Points of Order

3.30 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. Yesterday, the whole House heard a statement by the President of the Board of Trade, indicating the important role of Mr. Gerald James of Astra in exposing the affairs of BMARC. Today, we have no statement from the President of the Board of Trade that he is suspending or withdrawing his politically decided prosecution, under the Companies Act, of Mr. Gerald James and the other directors of Astra. Have you had notice of such a statement?

Madam Speaker: I understand that the hon. Gentleman is asking me if I have had notice of any statement by the President of the Board of Trade. The answer is no. I am sure that, if that had been the case, we would all have known about it because it would have been on the annunciator screen by 1 o'clock.

Mrs. Alice Mahon (Halifax): Last Friday, we had a debate on the Government's White Paper, "Tackling Drugs Together". Since then, we have seen reports—I am sure that you have seen them, Madam Speaker—of the Royal College of Nursing survey that shows that mental hospitals and patients are becoming a paradise for drug pushing. Given that the Government will make the chief executives of the health authorities responsible for co-ordinating Government policy, is not that a contradiction? Have the Secretary of State for Health or the Home Secretary said whether they will be making a statement about that latest evidence of exploitation?

Madam Speaker: The answer is no. I have had no indication that a statement is to be made.

WELSH GRAND COMMITTEE

Ordered,

That the Matter of rural affairs in Wales, being a Matter relating exclusively to Wales, be referred to the Welsh Grand Committee for its consideration.—*[Mr. Wood.]*

Employers' Organisations

3.32 pm

Mr. Denis MacShane (Rotherham): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to set up a Royal Commission to examine the role and purpose of federations and other organisations representing employers with a view to making recommendations as to the desirability of a more united and representative network of employers' organisations able to discharge more effectively their obligations in economic and labour market policy fields nationally, regionally and in the community.

I ask the House to cast its mind back to the great reforms of trade union legislation—I phrase it as neutrally as I can—in the 1980s because, if reforms of trade unions were an issue 15 years ago, I believe that reforms of employer federations and companies are an issue today. If we consider organisations in the United Kingdom that represent or speak for employers in different forms, we see nothing but discord, incoherence and lack of unity. There is an alphabet soup of those organisations—the CBI, the IOD, the EEF, chambers of commerce, the IM or Institute of Management—and it is difficult to get any clear idea of what any one or all of them stand for. If, for example, the Confederation of British Industry supports EMU, the Institute of Directors naturally must oppose it. If the CBI is hostile to the social chapter inside the United Kingdom, we find it negotiating with the European trade union congress on social chapter questions via UNICE, the European employers federation.

There have been concrete proposals for mergers. Some 25 years ago Lord Devlin proposed that the Association of Chambers of Commerce and the CBI should merge, but his suggestion was brushed aside. Three or four years ago the Engineering Employers Federation and the CBI were involved in merger talks, but the proposed merger was rejected. We have the absurd spectacle of two competing organisations—the EEF and the CBI's National Manufacturing Council—speaking on behalf of the manufacturing sector.

Who belongs to those organisations and what do they do? Compared with trade unions, they are cult-like and secretive. Their directors come from we know not where and they are not accountable in the full public sense of the word. According to the certification office, there are 230 employer federations or associations—that is more than three times the number of trade unions. As a confederation, the CBI is not covered by the same rules as employer associations. Its accounts, internal practices and even its membership are shrouded in secrecy.

The Institute of Directors, which is often in the news, is nothing more than an agreeable Pall Mall club. Half its members live overseas and we know nothing about them. If in the early 1960s it raised eyebrows to state one's occupation as "model" on one's passport, today I think that we should be concerned about the occupation of "company director"—especially in the case of Cabinet Ministers who were former directors of companies such as BMARC.

I have to admire the IOD's chutzpah, but it should be seen for what it is: the extreme end of the industrial wing of the Tory party and a glorious excuse for expense account outings to listen to the musings and the ideology of the admittedly able executives whom it employs. The CBI, on the other hand, is a much more coherent and solid organisation. It patrols the corridors of power and dispenses its chardonnay and chips with flair. But despite

[Mr. Denis MacShane]

the solidity and worth of its publications, it too has failed to keep an equidistance between the different social and political forces in the nation.

There is a state of what one might call permanent column-inch warfare among the different organisations. In that sense, they represent the modern world perfectly—that of press releases without responsibility, the prerogative of spin merchants throughout history. They claim power, but they reject responsibility for delivering effective training, shaping a pay policy that lessens rather than increases inequalities, and developing a patient stakeholder capitalism rather than the short-term greed of our dividend pay-out and share option society.

What are the answers? I can do no better than turn to the book entitled "Where there's a Will", written by a prominent contender for the leadership of the Conservative party—but I shall not enter into that debate now. In his book, the President of the Board of Trade pointed out that

"every EEC country except for Belgium and Ireland bestows public law status on its chambers of commerce. Each is required to act on behalf of all enterprises within its locality and all companies are required to join. The collective voice of business is thus regionally and sectorally representative and so the more powerful in dealing with government. In return for State funding, through a special tax mechanism, the chambers provide a number of facilities . . . in such matters as apprentice training, aspects of vocational education, technical counselling, or legal advice".

I urge all hon. Members to accept the sound advice of the President of the Board of Trade. The Government should translate his words into policy. I know that he is an old Heath-style tripartite corporatist, a self-confessed Euro-fanatic and almost a closet social democrat in the Cabinet, but he speaks with some wisdom.

If the incoherence is marked at a national level, it is even more so at local level. Earlier, in DTI questions, we heard reference to business links. I support the setting up of the business links, but they compete now with chambers of commerce and with training and enterprise councils. Again, we have confusion and incoherence at local level in representation of employers' interests.

I commend to the House the example set in Rotherham which I hope will be followed. The chamber of commerce and the training and enterprise council are discussing merging in order to form a Chamtec, which can open up new horizons for local representation.

The examples from Europe are so much more positive. In Denmark in the past three or four years the number of employers' organisations has been reduced by two thirds. In Germany there are three umbrella organisations—one for chambers of commerce, one for different industrial groupings and one for employers. They are all linked by one co-ordinating organisation. In France, the Conseil National du Patronat Francais represents 80 per cent. of all employing firms in France. It is able to participate as an effective partner, sometimes with the Government and sometimes with unions—not the old tripartite corporatism, but, as needed, to discuss pay, working hours, training and other aspects of the labour market.

Trade unions in Britain have changed dramatically, and for the better, in the past 15 years. Laws on their oversight, the election of their officials and ballots before they declare policy have worked and proved welcome. I think that trade unions would agree that they were wrong to reject those proposals 15 years ago, but they accept the reforms now. A similar package of reforms is overdue in the world of employers' organisations. Employers are ultimately the job creators. I accept that they are wealth providers. They have been left untouched and unreformed for a quarter of a century or more.

Britain needs national renewal. It needs an end to the master-servant relations so typical of our labour market under the Conservative Government and the creation of a post-corporatist partnership society. Employers' organisations should be at the cutting edge, leading that renewal, but they represent, alas, old, divided, and adversarial Britain. My Bill proposes a national debate and a genuine discussion. I commend it to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Denis MacShane, Ms Judith Church, Mr. Ken Purchase, Mrs. Helen Liddell, Mr. Robert Ainsworth, Mr. Stanley Orme, Ms Angela Eagle, Mr. Ken Eastham, Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Peter Hain, Mr. Jeff Rooker and Mr. Paul Flynn.

Employers' Organisations

Mr. Denis MacShane accordingly presented a Bill to set up a Royal Commission to examine the role and purpose of federations and other organisations representing employers with a view to making recommendations as to the desirability of a more united and representative network of employers' organisations able to discharge more effectively their obligations in economic and labour market policy fields nationally, regionally and in the community: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 14 July, and to be printed. [Bill 133.]

Orders of the Day

Representation of the People

3.42 pm

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Michael Howard): I beg to move,

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 6th June, be approved.

The boundary commission for England submitted its fourth periodic report on 12 April. I propose that its final recommendations should be implemented without modifications. Paragraph 2 of the order substitutes the constituencies described in the schedule for the present constituencies in England. If the draft order is approved by both Houses, I shall submit it to Her Majesty in Council to be made.

Paragraph 1(2) provides that the order comes into operation on the 14th day after the day on which it is made, but the new boundaries will come into effect only following the dissolution of Parliament at the next general election. That means that the existing constituency boundaries will continue to apply for any by-election before then.

As the House will be aware, the report of the Scottish boundary commission and the report of the Welsh boundary commission were both debated in March and the orders have been approved by Her Majesty in Council. I understand that the boundary commission for Northern Ireland hopes to submit its report to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland this month.

The boundary commissions have a long history. An all-party conference was set up under the chairmanship of the Speaker in 1917 to consider questions of electoral reform. Its reports recommended, among other things, the setting up of a boundary commission which was tasked to devise a scheme for the redistribution of seats. The rules within which the commission operated were found to be too strict and Parliament relaxed them, but, even so, the commission's final recommendations provoked some special pleading and complaints of damage to historic traditions.

Until 1918 there was no attempt to establish numerical equality between constituencies. After 1918, boundary commissioners, specially appointed for the purpose, strove to keep constituencies close to a national quota and, in doing so, breached for the very first time the principle of "communal" representation. Despite the boundary commissioners' efforts, by 1939 there were 20 constituencies with 100,000 electors and 13 constituencies with fewer than 30,000 electors. In 1942, a departmental committee recommended, among other things, the establishment of permanent boundary commissions to make general reviews of constituencies once in the life of every normal Parliament instead of leaving the situation to be dealt with only when gross anomalies had arisen.

The question was considered by Mr. Speaker's Conference in 1944. A solution was found which was acceptable to all the parties. It was agreed that, after an initial redistribution through statute, effect should be given to periodic boundary changes through an order presented in draft to Parliament by the Home Secretary of the day and approved by affirmative resolution of each House. That had the effect of allowing Parliament to continue to exercise its overall control of the redistribution of seats while not overwhelming the House with detail or endangering the independence of the boundary commission.

The Speaker's Conference recommendations were implemented in the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Act 1944, and that Act was subsequently amended and consolidated into the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. Under the 1986 Act, the boundary commissions were required to carry out a general review of parliamentary constituency boundaries not fewer than 10 or more than 15 years from the date of the submission of their previous report. In 1992, Parliament decided to increase the frequency of general reviews, and the Boundary Commission Act 1992 provides that a general review should be carried out not fewer than eight or more than 12 years after the date of the submission of the previous report.

The same Act provided that the first mandatory report which falls to be made after the passing of the Act should be submitted not later than 31 December 1994. The report that we are debating today is the first mandatory report of the boundary commission for England following the passage of the 1992 Act. It was submitted late, but the 1992 Act expressly provides that a failure by a boundary commission to submit a report within the time limit should not be regarded as invalidating the report for the purposes of any legislation.

The commission's fourth periodic report is the culmination of four years of intensive public work, preceded by more than two years of preparation. It would be wrong of me to proceed any further without taking this opportunity to thank Sir John Knox, the deputy chairman, and the members of the commission for the very great efforts that they have made in carrying out this work. I am sure that the House will join me in recognising that and in expressing appreciation of the care and dedication with which the commission, assistant commissioners and officers have approached their task and the meticulous conduct of the review which this report exemplifies.

The commission has a duty in a general review to look at England as a whole. As it is required to do, the commission announced its intention to begin the review and a notice to that effect was published in the *London Gazette* on 21 February 1991. That date is important as it represents the enumeration date, or the date on which the commission is required to base its calculations on electorate numbers. That and other elements of the process by which the commission is required to operate are governed by a set of rules for the redistribution of seats. The rules are set out in schedule 2 to the 1986 Act.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): The rules and the way in which inquiries take place throw up a most unfair practice affecting individual constituencies, when the commission puts forward a representation of what the constituency should comprise and another party puts forward its representation as to the distribution. If the other suggestion is taken up, there may be some minor alterations and there should be a mini-inquiry lasting half a day, or no more than a day, slightly amending and improving the final recommendation. That is not available and, in all fairness and justice, it should be.

Mr. Howard: It can be. As my hon. Friend is aware, the commission has a discretion to hold a second inquiry.

[Mr. Howard]

Later, I shall explain that there have been occasions—two in the course of the review—when a second inquiry was made. My hon. Friend has asked me to look at the procedures and we intend to do so, and I shall explain to the House in due course how we intend to carry out that exercise.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): My right hon. and learned Friend may be aware of the concern expressed in Southend-on-Sea that the new constituency is to be called Rochford and Southend, East as opposed to Southend, East and Rochford. Can he provide any guidance as to how on earth the boundary commission decides on the names of constituencies and which boroughs it puts first?

Mr. Howard: I am sure that my hon. Friend will have read the report of the boundary commission and in particular that part of its report which deals with Southend and Rochford. I would add to or put any gloss on the conclusions of the commission at my peril. I am sure that my hon. Friend, in intervening in my speech, was not seeking to put me in any peril. I hope that he will understand if I refer him to the report of the commission and say that what he finds there explains, as far as it can be explained, the basis of the commission's decision. I fear that I can neither add to it nor subtract from it. I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful to my hon. Friend.

The rules set out in schedule 2 to the 1986 Act have the effect of requiring that the number of parliamentary constituencies in England should not be substantially greater than 507 and provide criteria on considerations of electoral equality, local ties, administrative boundaries and geographical considerations within which the commission must exercise a general discretion.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there is considerable confusion in London as to how the boundary commission can say that electorates of 55,000 are right in two Islington constituencies and then create constituencies of 80,000 elsewhere in London? Surely that is not equalising the worth of a vote.

Mr. Howard: I am aware of the concern that exists in London. If hon. Friend will restrain himself, I shall in a moment deal with the position on London and the commission's approach to it.

I was explaining the rules that provide that the number of English constituencies should not be substantially greater than 507. The House will appreciate that that requirement creates a problem. The current composition of the House includes 524 English seats and the report that we are debating recommends that there should be a further increase of five to 529. The difficulty arises from the fact that the 1986 Act does not define what may be properly considered as "substantially greater". It is for the commission to exercise its discretion in determining how to interpret that particular rule.

The problem with the rules is not a new phenomenon. They have often been the subject of some controversy and the House spent a considerable amount of time in 1983 debating them at the time of the third periodic review report.

The Home Affairs Select Committee looked at the rules in 1987 and identified a number of concerns, of which the principal one was the growth in the number of seats that has followed each general review. That process is described in the commission's report as a ratchet effect and was commented on also by the Welsh boundary commission in its report, submitted in December last year. The Home Affairs Select Committee came up with a number of recommendations, some of which the Government accepted and intend to adopt at a suitable legislative opportunity. But its proposal for a fixed divisor as a means of stabilising the number of seats was not accepted, although the Government agreed in principle that the size of the House should be stabilised.

The House returned to consideration of the rules when it debated and approved the Boundary Commission Act 1992. The Government said during that debate that they would wish to look again at the rules on completion of this fourth general review. That remains our intention, and I have asked my officials to begin planning for that review, which I intend will start this summer after Parliament has had the opportunity to consider the report of the boundary commission for Northern Ireland, which will be the last of the four commissions to report. The review of the rules will be a major exercise in which we shall consult a wide range of interested parties.

Mr. Jeff Rooker (Birmingham, Perry Barr): Will the review take account of the city of Birmingham's unique situation? The average ward size is 19,000 electors. If parliamentary constituencies cannot have equal numbers of wards, there are bound to be disparities between one constituency and another of at least 19,000 because of the impossibility of splitting wards—that is the crucial factor. It cripples the boundary redistribution in Birmingham in a way that is not reflected anywhere else in England.

Mr. Howard: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I am sure that he will understand that I do not propose to draw up the terms of reference of the review while I am on my feet in this debate; but I certainly undertake fully to consider his point when drawing up those terms of reference.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): Who is going to conduct this review? As it is so important, it must be seen to be done fairly. Would it not therefore be better to set up a team reflecting all shades of political representation, perhaps headed by a High Court judge, than to use people from the Department?

Mr. Howard: We shall consider the hon. Gentleman's point. As I have just said, the review will involve consultation with a wide range of interested parties. That is how we have always approached these matters; we have always sought to reach consensus whenever possible, and we shall continue to proceed on that basis.

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): When my right hon. and learned Friend reviews the rules later this summer, will he undertake to look again at the extraordinary rules that have resulted in the anomaly, in London, of a difference of 27,000 electors between the largest and smallest constituencies? Two constituencies of 55,000 electors are thought too small for some reason, but two others in Islington, with 55,000 and 54,000 electors, are not thought too small.

Mr. Howard: I shall be coming to London in a moment. We shall certainly try to learn from all relevant experience, in the context of the review, so that we may

arrive at a set of rules that will achieve the widest possible support and the best possible answer. That will be the object of the exercise and the purpose of the review.

It is the rules as they are currently written which provide the basic criteria against which the fourth periodic review has been carried out. The recommendations in the commission's report are, I have no doubt, the most closely considered, discussed and debated that any English commission has yet produced. Certainly the report that carries the detail of the proposals, inquiries, consideration and counter-proposals is more than twice the length of, and has twice as many volumes of maps as, its predecessor of 1983.

The commission has produced recommendations that will affect to a greater or lesser extent the make-up of more than seven out of 10 English parliamentary seats. It has conducted public inquiries in almost every London borough, in metropolitan and non-metropolitan districts. Second inquiries were necessary in Hampshire and Devon because new proposals were introduced after the first public inquiry which the commission considered had not been fully explored in earlier phases of the review.

The commission's proposal for an increase in the overall number of seats in England is one which I know was not arrived at without careful consideration of other options. There would have been an increase of 20 seats rather than the five now proposed if the commission had not been able to balance some increases by reductions in the number of seats elsewhere.

One of the major factors that allowed the commission to limit the number of new constituencies was a continuation of a pattern which had been identified by its predecessors in 1983, of a migration of the electorate out of, in particular, the Greater London area. The commission has found it necessary to reduce by 10 seats the number of constituencies in London boroughs, and recommends that the electorate in the London boroughs should be represented by 74 constituencies. That compares with 92 seats before the 1983 review, a net loss over the 12 years from 1983 of 18 seats.

In addition, for the first time, the commission has taken the view that in London it is necessary to cross borough boundaries so that it may meet the requirements of rule 5, which requires it to recommend constituencies which are as near to the electoral quota as is practicable.

Mr. John Marshall: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that within London there is concern that London seats with an electorate of 50,000 and more would be got rid of by the boundary commission, whereas the commission has created smaller seats elsewhere—for example, Glasgow, Shettleston, with 48,000; Paisley, North, 49,000; Glasgow, Govan, 50,000 and Glasgow, Cathcart, 50,000? That is not an equalisation of votes across the country.

Mr. Howard: My hon. Friend touches on a very significant point. He is right. There is no equalisation of votes across the United Kingdom. Scotland is dealt with separately by a separate commission under separate rules. There is no doubt that Scotland is represented by more smaller constituencies than is England.

I return to London. The decision to cross borough boundaries was not taken lightly. It was a break with the precedent maintained by earlier commissions, and required the commission to depart from rule 4, which requires that the boundaries of the London boroughs should not be broken. The decision is one that the commission is entitled to make within the rules. Before doing so it set itself criteria to be applied to any decision to cross boundaries. The criteria required the commission to consider crossing boundaries only where the result would be not to increase the number of seats which would otherwise have been allocated to individual boroughs, and where the result provided a better match with the electoral quota than would otherwise have been achieved. No boroughs on opposite sides of the River Thames below Kingston upon Thames were paired.

That method of working was discussed with the political parties in a meeting before the start of the review of London boroughs so as to explain the commission's general approach to London and to give the political parties the opportunity to comment. In common with the approach adopted generally to publicising its work, the commission issued a newsletter during the summer of 1992 detailing that discussion and the proposed methodology that it would use.

In metropolitan areas outside London, the commission has been much more prepared than in the past to recommend constituencies crossing metropolitan district boundaries. That is in order to give full regard to the requirements of electoral parity. The rules require, so far as is practicable, that constituencies in metropolitan boroughs should be contained within county boundaries, but they do not restrict the commission from crossing borough boundaries. The commission's recommendations on this occasion call for borough boundaries to be crossed on 13 occasions, compared with six such crossings in 1983. The commission's recommendations involve a reduction of five seats in the metropolitan counties against the present number.

By comparison, the review has resulted in proposals for an overall increase in the number of constituencies in non-metropolitan districts. The counties will, if the recommendations are accepted by Parliament and approved by Her Majesty in Council, return 20 more representatives to the House after the next general election.

On this occasion, as with previous general reviews, the boundary commission found that its work coincided with that of other review bodies considering local government reorganisation. The boundary commissions are required by the 1992 Act to report within the specified deadline, and therefore it was not an option for them to delay or defer their work until that local government reorganisation had been completed. The effect of the 1992 Act was that the English commission had to take account only of those local authority boundaries that were in force on 1 June 1994.

The commission states that subsequent changes, particularly in the non-metropolitan counties, could affect the constituency boundaries that are now proposed. The commission may therefore decide to hold interim reviews in parts of England to consider further realignments of constituency boundaries where the effects of local government reorganisation make that necessary. That is entirely a matter for the commission to decide, but I understand that it is unlikely that any interim review would be completed before the next general election.

I turn now to the detail of the report. It has been suggested that these are the most controversial recommendations that an English boundary commission

[Mr. Howard]

has proposed. A careful reading of *Hansard* reports of earlier debates suggests that that charge has been raised against every periodic report. Nevertheless, the volume of representations that I and the commission have received on this occasion is convincing evidence of the interest that we in this House, and the electors in the constituencies, take in the subject.

The Roman author, Terence, writing more than 150 years before the birth of Christ, put the issue succinctly when he wrote:

"so many men, so many options; his own a law to each."

The boundary commission has produced a most thorough examination of the constituency map and has produced a report with a great many recommendations for change. I do not propose to go into the detail of each recommendation—to do so would be to try the patience of the House, as many of the recommendations are such that they require a detailed examination of the excellent maps that are provided in the report.

There are, however, a number of recommendations that are right for me to highlight in introducing this order. I have already touched on the decision to cross London borough boundaries. It is the first time that cross-borough constituencies have been proposed in London, and the practice has attracted a considerable amount of discussion among the London electorate and with local political parties, and, already, in the House this afternoon.

That is a course that is open to the commission to take. As a result of crossing borough boundaries, the commission now proposes three fewer seats in Greater London than would have been the case otherwise. Another effect has been to reduce from 27 to one the number of London borough constituencies that have a disparity from the electoral quota of more than 20 per cent., when compared with the existing constituencies at the enumeration date of 21 February 1991.

Outside London, the commission's recommendations produce a similar pattern of a reduction in the number of constituencies that are more than 20 per cent. at variance with the electoral quota. The reduction in the metropolitan districts is from 16 such constituencies in 1991 to only one now recommended. In the non-metropolitan districts, it is from 31 to two. Improvements of that nature are not achieved without considerable thought, discussion and, at the end of the day, inevitably, some compromise. The recommendations on three areas outside London have given rise to particular debate.

In West Sussex, the commission was faced with two strongly opposed arguments on how to deal with the distribution of seats representing towns along the coast and their immediate hinterland. The commission held a public inquiry and considered representations that were made to it. The public inquiry was conducted by an independent assistant commissioner selected from a panel appointed by my predecessor. The commission expressed some sympathy with the proposal that the area should be represented by constituencies that linked the coastal towns with their immediate adjoining hinterland, but concluded that the better solution would be to create constituencies that linked the coastal towns together.

I know that a number of hon. Members will regard that as having been the wrong decision. But it was a decision not taken lightly by the commission, which had regard, as it must within the rules, to the extent and strength of local ties, as those ties were expressed at the public inquiry and in representations.

Quite properly, the boundary commission has not approached its task in a mechanistic manner. In some instances counter-proposals proved to be more acceptable to the local electorate. Where the commission was able to do so within the rules, it produced revised recommendations in the light of such counter-proposals.

In Manchester and Trafford the public inquiry revealed strong local feeling that the Wythenshawe community should not be divided, as the commission had originally proposed. The commission considered several alternative options that had been suggested to it and concluded that the original proposals should be modified.

The effect of that response to local opinion was that it was no longer possible to bring together in a single constituency the community of Sale, which had been split between constituencies by the third periodic review. The commission's decision to reflect the strength of the local views expressed to it resulted in a further strongly mounted campaign of petitions and representations, the "Save our Sale" campaign, which sought a reversion to the original proposals.

In that case the commission held to the revised proposals, but the particular case of Manchester and Trafford illustrates what I am certain hon. Members will appreciate from their own backgrounds—the especially difficult circumstances within which the commission must work and the dilemmas that result from the requirement to take into account and respond to public opinion.

Mr. Winston Churchill (Davyhulme): Will my right hon. and learned Friend explain to my constituents in Davyhulme, especially to those in Sale, who, although they live in part of Trafford, will now be thrown across the boundary into the city of Manchester for electoral purposes, why the boundary commission rejected its own impartial proposals on the strength of a mere 327 objections, principally from the Wythenshawe constituency, yet was not prepared to re-examine the revised proposals when it received more than 12,500 letters of objection from my constituents—by far the highest number of protests ever received on one issue by the boundary commission?

Mr. Howard: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) earlier, the commission made the decisions and the commission has explained them. I can add nothing to, nor subtract anything from, what the commission says in its report on the matter. I understand my hon. Friend's frustration and the strength of his feeling, but he will understand that I cannot go beyond the reasoning given by the commission in its report, so I hope that he will bear with me.

At this stage I propose to deal with only one more example of the concerns that the commission has been required to face and overcome. Rossendale, like so many of the old communities in Lancashire, has a clear sense of local identity. The boundary commission's initial proposals called for the town of Haslingden to be separated from the Rossendale and Darwen constituency, breaking that community. The commission received a great many representations arguing for the retention of local ties, and my noble Friend Baroness Blatch received

an all-party delegation on the matter headed by Sir David Trippier, who represented the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen in the House for several years.

In the case of Rossendale it was generally acknowledged that the district would have provided a coherent and reasonably sized constituency. But the commission believed that it would not then have been possible to construct sensible constituencies in the remainder of Lancashire. On that occasion, therefore, it held to its original proposals.

Many other points could be made about the recommendations for individual constituencies, and I have no doubt that hon. Members will wish to raise many of them in the debate. Before I finish speaking and allow that debate to start, however, it is right that I should again pay tribute to the overall achievements of the commission.

The report is the work of an independent body headed by a deputy chairman who is a High Court judge. As the House is aware, I have a power to modify the recommendations of the commission through the draft order. The relevant provision in the 1986 Act does not place any constraints on the exercise of that power. However, in considering whether I should make any modification I have been acutely aware of the practical constraints on its exercise.

One such constraint lies in the risk that I would be accused of making a change not because of its merits but because of political bias.

Mr. Terry Lewis (Worsley): Surely not.

Mr. Howard *rose—[Interruption.]* I am much reassured by the fact that the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) thinks such an accusation inconceivable.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): In fact I said, "What's new?"

Mr. Howard: Moving a ward from one constituency to another may affect the outcome of any election in those constituencies.

In approaching the consideration of how I might exercise my power under the Act, I have started from the proposition that, before modifying a recommendation, I would need to be persuaded that any substantive change could be shown to result in a greater compliance with the rules than did the commission's recommendations, that there would be no adverse implications for neighbouring seats, and that the proposed change commanded such widespread support as to justify my overturning the recommendation of an impartial body.

None of the representations that have been made to me in respect of the current report has persuaded me that a change would be justified when judged against those criteria. Accordingly, after giving the question careful consideration, I decided not to modify the recommendations.

It is worth emphasising the point of the impartial nature of the commission. Boundary commissions are independent bodies that properly take no instruction from the Government of the day in reaching their conclusions. The commission has reached its recommendations on that basis. I commend the report that contains those recommendations and the order that gives effect to them to the House.

4.15 pm

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Like the Secretary of State for the Home Department, I place on record our appreciation of the work of the boundary commission and its officials, and I commend him for bringing the order to the House intact and without amendment.

The Secretary of State was right to imply that all hon. Members have an entirely legitimate, let it be said, partisan interest in the outcome of the recommendations. On this occasion, I am relaxed about the results of the commission's recommendations on Lancashire as they leave my constituency wholly untouched.

I took a different view about the 1983 recommendations. If it is any comfort to the hon. Members for Finchley (Mr. Booth) and for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), who are battling for a single seat, in 1983 I also took a different view about the partiality of the commission—although of course I never said so—because it added 20,000 mainly Conservative electors to my constituency. It made it a constituency of 75,000 people, to keep the Ribble Valley constituency at 55,000. I also, therefore, have a personal interest in these matters.

The Secretary of State was right in his comments about the importance of the House respecting the integrity and independence of the commission. We have only to consider other countries to realise what extraordinary difficulties they can face when their politicians allow themselves to make the final decisions on such matters.

I have here a detailed article from the *American Political Science Review*. Astonishingly enough, it is entitled:

"Enhancing Democracy Through Legislative Redistricting"—

in September 1994, that publication finally came to the opinion that that was possible. That article's summary seriously discusses the issue of gerrymandering. It says:

"while some researchers believe that gerrymandering dramatically increases partisan bias and others deny this effect, we show both sides are in a sense correct. Gerrymandering biases electoral systems in favor of the party that controls the redistricting as compared to what would have happened if the other party controlled it, but any type of redistricting reduces partisan bias as compared to an electoral system without redistricting."

That serious academic work backs up gerrymandering, provided that it takes place in the context of redistricting.

The fact that serious academic money can be devoted to such academic nonsense illustrates what can happen when a country does not establish proper procedures for determining boundary changes. We should be proud of the arrangements that have been achieved. Of course, they need amendment and change, but those of us who, over the years, have had the job of giving evidence to various boundary commissions know that commission officers, assistant commissioners and the commission itself do their job with the very best of intentions: to ensure that what is produced is fair to all electors. They are acutely aware of the need to cut through the sort of partisan arguments that all political parties put up, to find where justice lies for communities.

The Secretary of State referred to the large number of representations that commissioners have received; I understand that, in total, they received 40,000 separate representations. That shows the health of our democracy and the interest that electors take in it. It is also significant in terms of the effectiveness of the review. In one sense it is better than previous ones because it was not the

[Mr. Jack Straw]

subject of a legal action by my right hon. Friend the leader of the Labour party or by the chairman of the Conservative party. One of the major academic studies suggests that the fourth review has achieved greater electoral equality than the third review. We should bear that in mind when weighing up cases for particular areas.

It has been suggested that we are entirely sanguine about the report because we think that we have achieved some partisan advantage from it. It is important to place it on record that the best estimate of the effect of the reforms is that the Conservative party is likely to gain more seats than Labour. The suggestion by Rawlings and Thrasher, which is mentioned in research paper 95/74 in the Library, is that the Conservatives might gain seven seats, Labour might gain two and the Liberal Democrats might suffer a loss of two. Therefore, while we welcome the report, we do not do so because we think that it is to our electoral advantage.

It is also worth bearing in mind the fact that although the number of electors in Conservative seats tends to be slightly larger than in Labour seats, the number of voters required to elect a Conservative Member is slightly fewer than for the election of a Labour Member. The figures are 41,943 for a Conservative Member compared with 42,605 for a Labour Member. That again suggests, if anything, a slight bias in the system towards the Conservative party.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): What about Scotland?

Mr. Straw: The order is about England, but the hon. Lady came in on cue. I am speaking about the Labour party, but she decided to speak about Scotland. At one time the Conservative party was as proud of its representation in Scotland as it was of its representation in England. In my lifetime, the Conservatives had many more seats in Scotland than the Labour party. If the hon. Lady is concerned about the small number of Conservative seats in Scotland, she should look to the collapse of the Conservative vote and the reasons for it, rather than trying to raise extraneous matters in a debate on an English order.

Perhaps the opinion that somehow we have done better from the review is based not on a serious statistical analysis of the review but on the view of those who have observed the different approach of the Labour party and the Conservative party to each of the inquiries. I should have thought that the hon. Member for Lancaster (Dame E. Kellett-Bowman) would be more concerned to ask me about the review in Lancashire. I went to that inquiry and I think that the hon. Lady was also there. We were faced with an extraordinary spectacle. There was a united Labour party, with one exception—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Bullies.

Mr. Straw: If the Labour party wanted lessons in bullying, it could certainly take them from the hon. Lady. [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh."] That is a compliment to the hon. Lady, and she knows it. I have nothing but profound affection for her, and she knows that too. The Labour party had a united front and presented coherent proposals, but the Conservative party was in utter shambles. One part of it presented proposals that were not backed by another part.

The Home Secretary spoke about Rossendale. That was a serious matter and he was right to speak about it. He was also right to say that the representations to the commission led by Sir David Trippier were all-party. The Labour group on Rossendale district council supported Sir David, as it was fully entitled to do, and not the overall view of the Labour party in Lancashire. So as to accommodate Rossendale, the Conservative party in Lancashire sought suddenly and at the last moment to extract a couple of wards from my constituency, both of which were Conservative, so I had no objection, connect them to four miles of fields bisected by a major motorway and attach them to a bit of Accrington. It then wondered why its proposals were not backed.

That is an illustration of the difference between us and the Conservative party. Indeed, I want to place on record my appreciation of officials at John Smith house and in the regions of the Labour party, ably led by David Gardner—after original prompting from my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) when he dealt with these matters—who ensured that we took the issue very seriously indeed.

The right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) said on "Newsnight"—I was alongside her as she said it—that we put in a better effort around the country because we were able to give central directions to our party, while Conservative central office was not. I often wondered what Conservative central office was for, except to give centralised directions. For decades, we had nothing but admiration for the way in which the Conservative party operated in respect of its local associations. Nothing has changed—

Mr. Howard *rose—*

Mr. Straw: Of course I shall give way in a moment. Nothing has changed in the constitution of the Labour party and its relationship with local parties over the past 15 years. We have learnt the lessons of the debacle in which we were involved in 1983, which did us no good, while the Conservative party seems to have forgotten all those lessons.

Mr. Howard: Has it not occurred to the hon. Gentleman that the difference between his party and mine is this: his party is a bunch of apparatchiks operating under centralised diktat, whereas the Conservative party believes in local democracy?

Mr. Straw: No, that thought had not occurred to me—because it happens not to be true. From a very early age, I was brought up in the Labour party being told by its organisers to admire the Stalinist way in which Conservative central office used to operate. I was asked why else it was named in that way. The Conservatives had this authoritarian machine, which ensured that the writ of the chairperson of the Conservative party was applied to the outer reaches of the United Kingdom whenever the chairman or chairwoman in his or her office in central office directed it. For a long time, that was the case. It is a mark of the profound divisions now afflicting the Tory party from top to bottom that it is not only divided on the major issues of Europe, economic policy and social policy, but on whether two wards in Rossendale should stay in the Rossendale borough or end up in Hyndburn.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Will my hon. Friend allow me to give him some meat for his argument? In my

area, members of the Kensington and Chelsea Tory party are fighting each other, as are members of the Fulham Conservative party. One of the ladies from one of those parties said to me that she did not care what those apparatchiks at central office were saying, and she used the words, "We are going our own way." Apparatchiks were present in central office, but they were not very competent.

Mr. Straw: I am very grateful to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Over in the London borough of Newham, we had nothing but total admiration for the excellent way in which Labour party officials marshalled the arguments. In the end, they had to persuade the local commissioner, or whoever it was who came from the boundary commission to hear the case. It was thanks to the quality of the arguments and the way in which they were marshalled—nothing to do with this knockabout stuff—that we were able to persuade in the way that we did.

Mr. Straw: As ever, my hon. Friend makes a serious point and reproaches the rest of us for introducing an element of humour into the proceedings. *[Laughter.]* I accept the reproach. It is an important point because it goes without saying, before such inquiries, that political parties will have a partisan interest in the representations that they are putting forward. That is a common factor in all the representations made. What is then important is the quality of the argument advanced by the political parties and the extent to which the political parties are able to ally with other non-party groups, to ensure that their recommendations win through. It is a mark of the connection between the Labour party and its communities that its argument won through and of the decay of the Stalinist apparatus of Conservative central office that its arguments failed.

I repeat my commendation of the commission to the Secretary of State—I hope that that does not damage an otherwise fine political career, but I repeat it because he was right to bring through the recommendations intact. It is accepted on both sides of the House, however, that there could and should be improvements to the system; I shall go through some of them.

I note that the Secretary of State said that he was establishing a review and I accept that, when those have taken place in the past, every effort has been made to ensure agreement. Another aspect of the way in which we approach these matters is that, despite our partisan interests, we ensure that changes to electoral law are introduced in this House and the other place, so far as humanly possible, only by agreement. I hope that in that spirit, therefore, the Secretary of State will accept the need for agreement about the nature and scope of the review as well as its precise agenda. Perhaps his hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will deal with that in his reply.

The following is not by any means an exclusive list, but it includes some of the issues that ought to be raised in the review. The first is the difficult issue of upward drift in the size of the House. It is worth mentioning that the House is not at its record size—it was larger last century, when it included Members of Parliament representing what is now the Republic of Eire—but its size has increased significantly. For reasons of obvious politics, but also for interesting reasons of arithmetic, the system has a natural bias towards increasing the size of the House. As the Secretary of State said, the Government did not accept the proposal of the Select Committee on Home Affairs for a fixed divisor. I have not reached a final view on the matter, but it ought to be closely examined during the review and we should take full account of the commission's recommendations and views in coming to a conclusion.

The second crucial issue is the size of electoral wards—a matter to which the commission drew attention. The local government ward is the basic building block, which cannot in any circumstances be broken according to rule. I believe that that is correct. The ward is the building block on which the commission has to work. In constituencies such as mine, with 15 wards for an electorate of about 75,000, each ward has an average electorate of 5,000, which does not create any serious problems for rearranging the wards to ensure electoral equality. I do not believe that that causes problems anywhere in the county of Lancashire, but in the metropolitan areas and some parts of London, the size of wards is so great as to hinder significantly the commission's ability to move the pieces of the jigsaw around.

The extraordinary disparity in the size of wards in otherwise similar areas is surprising and must be looked into when considering fair representation at local government level as well as the commission's facility to redistribute boundaries fairly. I understand the concern of the hon. Member for Hendon, South because in his area the wards are on the whole large, whereas in the south of London they tend to be much smaller. The House of Commons Library tells me that Hadley in Barnet, which has 13,714 electors, is the largest ward in London, whereas the Clockhouse ward in Sutton has an eighth of that number, with 1,525.

My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) mentioned the enormous size of wards in Birmingham in a question to the Secretary of State. Typically, Members of Parliament representing Birmingham seats have just three wards in their constituencies. The largest ward in the country is New Hall in Birmingham, Sutton with 24,816 electors; it is five times the size of wards in my constituency. At the other end of the scale, Cantril Farm ward in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Howarth) has 4,043 electors. The explanation for the low number in that ward might involve electoral registration, but even allowing for that, the disparity in the size of wards is unacceptably wide. I hope that the Government agree that, in looking at the size of wards, we must also look at whether wards should be represented by one, two or three councillors.

A great city such as Birmingham—this is a matter that I have thought about, and I do not doubt that Conservative Members have also done so—has a large council. Unless we wish to turn councils into chambers of legislature, there seem to be practical limits on the size of any council. Already, Birmingham has more than 100 councillors, and I do not believe that there is much scope for increasing the total number of councillors. Instead of having three councillors for each ward, we could have one or two. I happen to think—this is not a party view—that there are other advantages in doing that, as it produces a closer connection between the councillor and his ward. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Lancaster may be

[Mr. Straw]

saying under her breath that there are plenty of examples in shire districts of only one or two councillors for each ward.

A great span in terms of the size of wards can be found in the shire districts, ranging from 14,774 voters in Nene Valley in Northamptonshire to just 194 in Chenies, in the Chilterns in Buckinghamshire. Both are in the home counties, so there can be no argument that one is more rural than the other. Within the borough of Milton Keynes, wards range in size from about 13,000 to 1,620. That must be examined carefully.

We must look at the commission's recommendations in respect of the process of inquiry. The commission proposes that the statutory period for objection should be extended from one to two months, and that is a sensible proposal, which needs to be examined in detail. The commission also suggested that there should be a power to define the operational scope of inquiries.

During the Lancashire inquiry—the only one with which I have had direct contact—I was pleasantly surprised by the skill that the assistant commissioner showed in conducting an orchestra, the members of which were playing from different scores and to different time. There was a grave danger that the inquiry could have turned into a tribunal, with lawyers popping up. I know, and the Home Secretary accepts, that we are a fine body of men, but even lawyers sometimes have their disadvantages. There was a grave danger that lawyers would pop up the whole time and that the inquiry would be disrupted. As it happened, the assistant commissioner got through the process quickly and expeditiously. The commission recommended that the operational scope of inquiries should be defined, and I hope that that happens.

I now come to the issue of names. I took full account of what the hon. Member for Southend, East (Sir T. Taylor) said about some of the names that the commission has proposed. In my view, the mother and father of the confusion over the names of constituencies in England goes back to the ludicrous names given in the 1972 local government reorganisation process. In looking down a list of the names of districts in Surrey, for example, we see that some do relate to real places, such as Guildford and Epsom and Ewell. But there are others which, while I am not saying that they are not real places, are not very well-known real places, such as Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Waverley—easily confused with Waveney, another artificial name given to a part of Suffolk—and Spelthorne.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is it not absurd that the word Wyre occurs in two widely different constituencies?

Mr. Straw: The hon. Lady is absolutely right. It is ludicrous, and it must cause enormous confusion. It was not until I had the benefit of campaigning in both constituencies—and confusing each with the other—that I spotted the difficulty.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): A singular failure.

Mr. Straw: Well, there we are. I have referred to Waveney and Waverley, and the hon. Member for Lancaster was right to refer to Wyre. I might add that it took the people of Accrington a long time to understand that they lived in a borough of Hyndburn. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley (Mr. Lewis) thinks that Waverley is a station in Edinburgh.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I bring my hon. Friend more good news from the London borough of Newham, where there was always some feeling about that name, and say how much we welcome the boundary commissioners' recommendation to get rid of Newham, North-West and Newham, North-East and call those two constituencies West Ham and East Ham? If only the boundary commissioners were qualified to recommend the transfer of West Ham football club out of East Ham and into West Ham, that would have made more sense.

Mr. Straw: I do not mind where West Ham football club resides, provided that it keeps going. May I place on record my heartfelt thanks to West Ham football team for ensuring that Blackburn Rovers won the league championship?

We must ensure that constituency names, which after all are attached to us, are recognisable. The root of the word "Commons" is "commune". It means that we represent communities, not the common people, and it is important that the people should know which communities we represent. They should therefore not have artificial names.

The final issue that I wish to deal with is the size of the electoral register. In all the boundary commission's considerations, it is crucial that it has accurate information about the number of electors in each constituency and area under review. Ensuring that people are on the electoral register has always been challenging because some people have not wanted to be on it, and others have not been put on by landlords or landladies, or have moved away at the wrong time. Both sides of the House now accept, however, that as a result of the poll tax, for which the Secretary of State has some responsibility, although he does not often speak about it—

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It was a jolly good tax.

Mr. Straw: The hon. Lady says that it was a jolly good tax.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: It was a very fair tax because people who demand services on Christmas day, every day of the week and twice on Sundays and do not pay for it, did pay for it under the community charge.

Mr. Tony Banks: Why did you scrap it, then?

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: I did not want it scrapped.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. We are rapidly developing a sub-plot. Let us return to the main task.

Mr. Straw: The plot is the same. It is called "winning the election". I was only too delighted to give way to my good hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster because the more she talks about the poll tax between now and the general election, the more we are likely to win not only seats elsewhere in England but the hon. Lady's seat.

This is an important issue because the poll tax led to substantial under-registration, particularly but not exclusively in inner-urban areas. Although the poll tax has now gone, many people are still not on the register as

they lost the habit of registration. Moreover, insufficient resources have been invested in getting them back on to the register.

I have complimented the Secretary of State three times now, so even he would say that I have conducted myself in an entirely non-partisan way. I shall now revert to my normal approach and make an important partisan point. I wish to compare the amount spent on advertising registration on the electoral register for UK-based voters with the amount spent advertising registration abroad for overseas voters.

I choose 1991 because it was a pre-election year, which is also why the Conservatives chose it. In 1991, £218,000 was spent on publicity on the electoral roll for UK-based residents, but £705,000—three times as much—was spent on advertising registration abroad, to get expatriates on to the register in this country. If one relates those figures to the number of electors, the difference is phenomenal: 0.5p for each UK-based resident and £22 for each elector resident overseas.

I believe that that is wrong. We participated in the 1985 arrangements in respect of overseas electors, but there must be agreement between the parties about the amount of money that is to be spent on publicity and the way in which it is to be spent, and that was an abuse.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): Do the figures that the hon. Gentleman quoted include the amount of money spent by local authorities, which also spend money on persuading people to sign on to the electoral register? No local authority would spend money on trying to persuade expatriates or people in other countries to register. Therefore, I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman's figures are reliable if he has not included the money that is spent by local authorities. Will he tell us whether it was included or not?

Mr. Straw: The figures that I quoted are for central Government spending, not local authority spending. I accept that. Nevertheless, it does not alter the validity of my argument, because the national publicity campaign—the national television advertising and the other advertising—is the responsibility of the Home Office, and it undertakes it.

What is more, I doubt that, even if one were to include local authorities, the amount would be anything near 50p an elector—certainly nothing like £22. It is a marked disparity, and we believe that the Conservative party invested that extraordinary amount of money in the hope that it would achieve the registration of a large number of overseas electors in key marginal seats. It is okay for the Conservative party to do that, but it is not okay for taxpayers' money to be used for that purpose.

Mr. Tony Banks: What my hon. Friend says is absolutely correct in terms of the budget that was spent on trying to persuade people overseas to register. Would he like to tell us how it worked out, because it did not seem as if it was an especially successful campaign?

When one thinks about it, given the importance of getting people to register in a democracy, surely technology should have moved us on to a better way of getting names on to the register than going round filling it out, pieces of paper going through letter boxes and people being threatened with fines if they do not complete the form, but no fines ever being imposed. Surely technology can find a better way of conducting registration than that.

Mr. Straw: I agree with my hon. Friend. I shall discuss his argument later, but he asked me for some specific figures. They are as follows. In 1994, there were 38.5 million electors on the electoral register in England and Wales. The number of overseas electors peaked—I suggest, as a result of that publicity campaign—at 32,000 in 1991, but it has decreased since then, almost by half, to 17,500 in 1994.

My hon. Friend makes what is indeed my last argument.

Mr. Banks: I am sorry.

Mr. Straw: No. I know that my hon. Friend makes my arguments much better than I do, so I am delighted that he should do it.

Mr. Banks: Tell Tony Blair.

Mr. Straw: My hon. Friend makes my last argument, which relates to the way in which the electoral register is put together. That needs to be improved. In our opinion, there is an overwhelming case for the review to examine the introduction of rolling registers, which would be updated each month, for far more effective publicity to be given to the registration process and for far more publicity to be given to the need for people to register, especially young people, and to the fact that, if people are on the electoral register, that data can be used only for those purposes and cannot be used to set up liability for any other tax, which was the thing that so discouraged people during the short history of the poll tax.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is it not unfortunate that, in recent elections, there has been a decline in the number of people voting? That ties up with what my hon. Friend says about the electoral register. In secondary schools and so on, should not far more emphasis—indeed, as much as possible—be placed on the duty of citizens to vote at election time? I wonder whether my hon. Friend has given any consideration to the possibility of introducing the system, used in Australia and perhaps elsewhere, of compulsory voting. Why not?

Mr. Straw: I have personally considered the idea of compulsory voting and come down wholly against it. I believe that, in a democracy, people have a right not to vote, just as they have a right to vote.

I offer the practical thought that the party that said that it would punish people for not voting would ensure a very high turnout in the election in which it stood on that platform, which would ensure that it was out of power and never did it. I therefore believe that the possibility of achieving that aim might be limited.

Mr. Howard: Surely the hon. Gentleman does not believe that that type of base consideration would play the slightest part in influencing his hon. Friend.

Mr. Straw: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is correct in spotting the fact that my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) has higher motives than me. Of course that is correct, and I congratulate the right hon. and learned Gentleman on his perspicacity. Those who hold positions similar to mine have to think about crude and vulgar matters; that is how

[Mr. Straw]

we get things done. On that very important issue of principle, I believe that my hon. Friend shares my view that democracy in this country would not be advantaged by making voting compulsory.

My hon. Friend raised the point about better political education in schools. When I was at school, I studied a subject called civics, which dealt with political education in an entirely non-partisan manner.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: A direct grant school.

Mr. Straw: It was a direct grant school, but there is no reason why the same sort of subject could not be taught in non-direct grant schools, for God's sake. The subject gave my classmates and me an understanding of and an interest in the mechanics of politics. It is depressing that, while the voter turnout is increasing in other countries, our voter turnout is decreasing. I believe that we should consider other measures to encourage an increase in voter numbers. It is an extraordinary idea that we should vote on a Thursday. As we can now shop and bet on a Sunday, we may be able to get dispensation from the Church to vote on a Sunday. Why can we not vote on a Saturday?

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): The hon. Gentleman should not be quite so pessimistic, as the voter turnout increased at the last election.

Mr. Straw: It increased a little, but I am thinking particularly about local elections. The voter turnout at local elections has decreased and there were fewer people on the electoral register at the last election.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Straw: Perhaps I may be permitted to reply to the hon. Gentleman's question before the hon. Lady interrupts again. Although voter turnout increased slightly at the last general election, the number of people on the electoral roll decreased because of registration problems.

Dame Elaine Kellett-Bowman: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that at the last election the number of votes in my constituency increased by 2,000 on the previous election?

Mr. Straw: Lancaster is always the exception that proves the rule, as indeed is the hon. Lady.

Mr. Howard: It is an important point. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Mr. Arnold), who is sitting behind me, for providing the information that the total voter turnout has increased—not simply in percentage terms—every year since 1970, if my figures are correct.

Mr. Straw: I am sure that the figures are correct because they are at the back of the Conservative party diary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North makes the valid point that voter turnout at local elections has decreased in each of the past three years. The total size of the electorate has increased, but that is not reflected in the number of people who are registered on the electoral roll. There is no doubt that under-registration is a big problem. Between 2 million and 4 million adults who should be on the electoral roll are not registered to vote. What is more—and this should appeal to Conservative Members—when people move house, they often cease to be able to exercise their vote for a period of six to 18 months. That is also unacceptable.

This is an important debate, which goes to the heart of our democratic system. I commend the commission and the Secretary of State's recommendation. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to support it.

4.53 pm

Dame Angela Rumbold (Mitcham and Morden): I am very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the debate, although I am not absolutely certain that I am wise to do so. On this occasion, I do not necessarily speak in my capacity as the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden, although I always speak on behalf of my constituents. I might have made a suggestion to the commission when it conducted a review of my constituency, but it did not choose to accept our views. I shall fight another day on that issue and no doubt I shall be rather more successful.

I join the two Front-Bench spokesmen in paying tribute to the commission. It has done an exceedingly good and thorough job and I am sure that all Conservative Members would commend its work. I listened with some interest to being called, I suppose, a Conservative party apparatchik, in so far as part of my responsibilities in the Conservative party during the past three years has been to monitor the progress of the commission's work on behalf of our party.

I am being partisan. As the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) knows, he and I frequently disagree and we disagreed the other evening over the methodology of the way in which the Conservative party monitors the commission as opposed to the way in which we observed that the Labour party was working.

In the Conservative party, each and every constituency has a constituency party, which is entirely autonomous. It does not take instructions from the curiously named Conservative central office or from anybody else. While we may offer advice, as we did, and give serious consideration to the issues that are raised by the commission in such an inquiry, we can do no more than say that we believe that one course of action would be the best way forward. If constituency parties do not choose to take that advice, we are completely and absolutely unable to influence them further.

To whatever extent it may be argued by the Labour party that it has a similar system, we observed that very clear instructions were given to the constituency parties and their members that there should be acceptance of the Labour party's general direction. That would not have been possible in the Conservative party, however strongly we felt about the matter. I am glad that that is the situation because, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary said, that is democracy at its very best. I would hate to see it changed.

I should also like to put right a myth that has grown up in the press during the past two years or so. Frequently, when the media have spoken or written about the boundary review, they have said that the Conservative party expected to gain in the region of 21 seats as a result of the current boundary commission review. That figure was suggested by an ex-House of Commons colleague after the 1987 election and was based on the 1987 election results.

After the 1992 general election, that same colleague, who is sadly no longer in the House, quite correctly revised downwards his view of the likely number of seats that might accrue to the Conservative party, all things being equal, as a result of the forthcoming boundary commission review. His revision took that figure down to about 10 extra seats for the Conservative party. We do not believe, given how the distribution has gone under the current review, that we have failed to live up to that expectation.

On our calculations, taking into account that there are five new seats in England and three other seats—two in Wales and possibly one in Northern Ireland—making eight in total, we do not believe that we have done especially badly. We do not therefore allow or acknowledge the statement by the press that the Labour party has done very much better than the Conservative party. We believe that about eight seats will produce new, additional Conservative Members of Parliament. That is an important point to make.

I have another observation about the course of the recent boundary commission review. It looks very much as though the review has been much more wide ranging than we had originally anticipated. In other words, considerable changes have been made to constituencies throughout England. Those changes have been far-reaching, especially in the counties. They were not so far-reaching in metropolitan and urban areas.

The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) straight-facedly suggested—I do not accept this—that the commission was persuaded by the excellence of the arguments put forward by the Opposition as opposed to those put forward by other parties. I would say, however, that the decisions on metropolitan and urban areas depended—the hon. Member for Blackburn made this point at the end of his speech—on who was on the electoral register and the reasons they were or were not on it.

I question whether we should rely too much on the number of people who did or did not register and who did or did not vote based on the fact that they were trying to avoid being caught for one tax or another or for one purpose or another. It does not seem an especially strong or effective argument. Indeed, I am slightly surprised that it was taken into account by anyone.

Mr. Tony Banks: The commission did not take only the numbers into account; arguments about communities, links and other factors were brought into play. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was right to say that we in the Labour party have been taught to believe that the Conservative party machine was much more efficient than ours. Many of us were pleasantly surprised—some would say shocked—by how efficient the Labour party machine and its arguments turned out to be.

Dame Angela Rumbold: That may be a matter on which to congratulate the Labour party. Of course arguments about local communities are taken into account, but the Labour party has mentioned frequently that it is concerned that people have not registered because they were afraid of certain taxes. The community charge was cited as a specific example of a tax that a number of people in urban and metropolitan areas were trying to avoid. The argument I have described is poor and should not be brought to bear today.

I want now to make a more general point which I know several colleagues will also wish to raise. Important questions arise from the electoral quotas and the over and under-representation not only in England but in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. I accept that today's debate relates only to the redistribution of English seats, but it is none the less relevant to draw my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary's attention to the fact that, if he is to undertake a review, he must include in it his colleagues from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to ensure that the House does not fall into the trap of continuing the imbalance of seats between the various countries. That would be unacceptable, as was pointed out in the 1991 report of the Hansard Society's commission on election campaigns. It is a legitimate point to draw to the Government's attention.

In 1992, before the general election, there were 651 Members of Parliament. If the previous reviews had been based on equal electoral quotas, there should have been 629, because Scotland would have been entitled to 57 instead of 72 and Wales would have been entitled to 32 rather than 38. The latest review has done little to make amends. There is a strong feeling among Members of Parliament who represent English seats that that is unacceptable and merits further consideration.

Even in England, as colleagues will no doubt point out, there are great variations. London continues to be allocated more seats than any other part of the country because the electoral quota is assessed borough by borough, unlike the shire counties. It has 74 seats, which is, admittedly, a considerable reduction of the number in 1979.

None the less, our calculations, which were done before the review, led us to feel that London needed to lose a further three seats if it was to equate much more reasonably with the rest. The fact that the three seats were not removed from the equation means that there are discrepancies, which have been remarked on by my hon. Friends the Members for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and for Finchley (Mr. Booth).

Islington, South and Finsbury has an electorate of 54,443 and Islington, North has an electorate of 55,650. Bromley has three seats with electorates as follows: Beckenham, 73,653; Bromley and Chislehurst 75,388; Orpington 82,032. There is a significant discrepancy and little equity in the number of people whom individual Members of Parliament are to represent in the Greater London area. I know that the commission did not consider Greater London as a whole, but that issue must be taken into account and stressed if there is to be another review because it gives rise to considerable unrest.

There are discrepancies between other constituencies, of course. For example, Copeland in Cumbria has an electorate of just over 55,500, but that is due to special geographical conditions that are taken into account by the boundary commission. However, those special geographical considerations may lead to questions not only in English constituencies but elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

I have no difficulty in supporting the recommendations, which are thorough. As is the case with every other inquiry and review undertaken by an independent body, we have asked people to perform a task that requires the patience of Job. I certainly would not have wanted to be in their position. I know perfectly well that one cannot satisfy everyone. Indeed, I felt this afternoon that I was

[Dame Angela Rumbold]

likely to get more sympathy from Opposition Members than from Conservative colleagues simply because of the special responsibilities that I have held and because of my awareness of the political realities of working with friends as well as Labour colleagues. However, I believe that the issues that I have raised are worthy of study in any future review.

I do not believe that the Conservative party as a whole has cause for complaint. I do not think that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will hear any complaints about the outcome of the review other than those relating to specific constituencies. I think that the commission has done a very good job and that it deserves our commendation.

One hears a great deal from those who spend their lives—academics and others—trying to work out precisely what would happen if everyone voted the way that they voted three, eight or 12 years ago. Having been redistributed from one seat to another, those people will not make as much of a difference as they did in the place they first voted. As a result, the Labour, Conservative or Liberal party, or whichever party those people decide to mark up, would get an electoral advantage of 0.6 per cent. or 0.2 per cent if there were an election tomorrow, calculated on the basis of the same number of people going to the polls.

One could spend a great deal of time playing with the figures and being academic about them but, as one who has been involved in local and general elections for the past 20 years, I can say that the reality is that the party that is elected is the party that pleases the electorate most. Each and every one of us will discover that the next time there is a general election. It will not be decided by academics playing with points on a diagram or by boundary changes. We would do well to reflect on those points this afternoon.

5.9 pm

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): My reason for intervening in the debate is to draw attention to the size of the House of Commons and the way in which the instructions that we give the boundary commission affect that. I was pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) told the Home Secretary that we should debate the issue, as I consider it profoundly important.

First, let me make a few comments about the boundary commission's work in west London. I congratulate the boundary commission on the way in which it has carried out its work. It was very fair. As my hon. Friend the Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) said, at one stage we in the Labour party believed that we would end up with a net loss of some 20 seats. In fact, the outcome was broadly politically neutral and that is to the boundary commission's credit.

Certainly, there was a major debate in my area between the various political parties. The problem for the Conservative party was that local parties gave conflicting evidence. One local Conservative party branch agreed with me about the proposed changes; another disagreed. As we know from our experience in 1983, if a party gives conflicting evidence it tends to lose out.

I have to stress the importance of the boundary commission locally. I have represented Hammersmith for 16 years. At the next election, the constituency of Hammersmith will cease to exist. The southern wards of my constituency will go into the new seat of Hammersmith and Fulham. The other five wards, including the one where I live, will go into the new Ealing, Acton and Shepherds Bush seat. If, as I hope and anticipate, I am successful in representing the area after the next election, I shall represent Ealing, Acton and Shepherds Bush instead of Hammersmith.

Although I understand the need for the change, I regret not being able to continue to represent Hammersmith. It is a remarkably good area to represent—a mixed inner-city area—and I have enjoyed it immensely. I know it well and I shall miss the southern part of my constituency. However, I recognise that the change is necessary because of the small size of my constituency.

At the time of the review, I took the view that it would have been better to move the boundary into north Kensington, not least because the Notting Hill carnival would have been in my constituency. One could hardly have a better carnival. It is a quite remarkable event and I recommend it. When David Gardner, who also deserves congratulations, put it to me that it would not be logical, he was right: the only way to make sense of the surrounding areas was for Shepherds Bush to be linked with Ealing, Acton, with which it also has a number of connections.

My main point is about the size of constituencies. My constituency had to change because I have an electorate of about 47,000. Although I had some quite innovative and exciting thoughts about representing Hammersmith in the winter and teaming up with Western Isles to become the Member for Western Isles in the summer in order to improve the figures, the logic was that the size of the constituency had to be increased. It is one of the smallest constituencies in the country—14th, to be precise. The electorate will increase from 47,000 to 83,000 and my work load will double overnight.

In general, Members of Parliament work very hard. If hon. Members do their constituency work well, they will know that the burden of that work is considerable, especially if they represent inner-city areas. An increase in the electorate from 47,000 to 83,000 will produce a dramatic increase in the work load; I shall have to change my approach to the work and the area.

As has been said, there are 651 Members of Parliament. That will increase by nine or 10. For some years, I have felt that one of the most important reforms that we can make in the House is rather painful—recognising that too many Members sit in the House of Commons. In my view, we should reduce our number over a period from 650 to nearer 450. Before somebody jumps up and asks, "Will you volunteer to be one of the 200 who go?", I should like to say that the quick answer is no. There is, however, a more sophisticated answer and I shall come to that shortly.

Mr. Tony Banks: I agree with everything that my hon. Friend has said, particularly about our work load, which I shall discuss if I manage to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I add some extra ammunition to my hon. Friend's excellent argument? The United States Senate

and House of Representatives have a total membership of 535, representing a population significantly larger than that of our small country.

Mr. Soley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What follows from my recommendation, which I hope we shall debate in future years—perhaps between Front Benchers on either side of the House, among the parties and in the Chamber—would dramatically affect how the House of Commons works and the quality of our work.

Members of Parliament have not had a good press recently, but let us look at the good side. Most Members of Parliament work extremely hard. They dedicate themselves largely to the work of their constituents and at the same time try to address national and international issues. It is profoundly important work, but even with the increase a couple of years ago, the allowance that we receive is still too little.

Like all Members of Parliament, I receive enough to employ one secretary and a part-time worker. If, as at present, my secretary goes on holiday, I depend on being able to afford to bring in someone to work two days a week. The rest of the time, unless I am in the office, people are likely to get the answerphone. That is not a good service.

Let us look at the other end of the scale and consider an issue that is profoundly important to all Members of Parliament, particularly Back Benchers. I understand from the Speaker's Office that a Member of Parliament can expect to speak only four times a year in a major debate. Hon. Members on both sides of the House should ask themselves how much time they spend in the Chamber trying to speak in a debate, having no chance of doing so and eventually leaving the House without having spoken on what may be important to their constituents or on issues of national or international importance.

It is not desirable for Members of Parliament to be in the absurd position of trying to speak in debates, and getting in only four times a year. The figure of four or five times a year often means that a Member may make a speech of no more than 10 or 15 minutes' duration. I was always opposed to the 10-minute rule which limits Back Benchers' speeches to 10 minutes, not because I do not think it is possible to make a good speech in 10 minutes—often the best speeches are short—but because there are times when one cannot do that and, more important, the 10-minute rule impacts heavily on Back Benchers who have not made Privy Council status or been on the Front Bench or are fairly new to the House. Those are the ones who get squeezed out. At the end of the debate, the 10-minute slot often becomes a five-minute slot. If we want to be more effective, we have to give ourselves more time here.

Hon. Members should ask themselves another question. I tried to get information and was unable to do so because I gather that the Speaker's Office cannot analyse the information in this way. How many times on average can hon. Members expect to get called for a question? Some people seem remarkably lucky at Prime Minister's Question Time and their names pop up again and again. Why those people do not win the national lottery is beyond me. Perhaps they do, and are just not owning up, but in my experience the number of times one gets into the top slot for asking a question at Prime Minister's questions is very small. One is lucky to get in once or twice a year. On the same basis, questions to Ministers are not likely to be called or to get into that part of the Order Paper that enables a Member to make what may be an important point. If Members of Parliament are to be effective, we need to give them more time to have an impact in the House, and that means in the Chamber, not just in Committee.

If we reduced the size of the House from 651 to about 450, there would need to be a dramatic increase in the resources available to hon. Members to do their jobs. Those resources would not necessarily be paid in cash. I want to employ people to do my research and to provide me information that I need. I have spent 10 of my 16 years here as a Front-Bench spokesman. When I was the shadow Minister for housing and planning and the Government used to table several hundred amendments after the Committee stage of a Bill, to be dealt with on the Floor of the House, I was expected to deal with the amendments with one part-time researcher. That is not the way to get good legislation.

I ended up having to take my own view of the wisdom or otherwise of a particular amendment, and relying on what outsiders had to say—local authorities, housebuilders' associations and groups of planners. They would write to me with their views on an amendment; I would come up with a synopsis, form my own view and then decide whether the Labour party should officially oppose or support an amendment. That is no way to do business. It leads to bad legislation which can come back and hit one in the eye. People on the receiving end of bad legislation do not appreciate it. One has only to think of the poll tax, the Child Support Agency, and so on—

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the number of seats should go down, but he also has to think about the implications for government. Who knows? If a thunderbolt strikes the country in two years' time, he may find himself a Minister. Does he agree that, if our numbers fall, the number of Ministers should also be reduced—dramatically? Of course, if it is proportionate, Back Benchers will have no greater chance of making speeches of the length that the hon. Gentleman wants; but he must deal with the fact that the whole machinery of government should be reduced too.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Order. I trust that we will not begin a wide-ranging constitutional debate. The debate is beginning to stray far from the actual subject before us.

Mr. Soley: I appreciate that comment, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am describing how the boundary commission's work results in the House growing ever bigger. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn and the Home Secretary that this whole subject should be discussed—but not now, I acknowledge. I will not pursue what the hon. Gentleman had to say, except to give the view that some of the consequences will entail devolved government. That is one reason why I favour regional government so strongly. I would be happy to pursue that subject—*[Interruption.]*—but I will not do so on this occasion.

Because our constituencies are relatively small, our constituents often treat Members of Parliament as councillors. I have always taken the view that constituents with council problems should go in the first instance to their councillors. I do not always make myself popular in my constituency when I insist on that. I am disturbed

[Mr. Soley]

when people are given the impression that councillors do not matter—that they need not bother to vote for them because they can go straight to their Member of Parliament. That is why I ask people to see their councillors first.

If we act on that suggestion and instruct the boundary commission to reduce the size of the House over time, Members of Parliament will be called on to perform as substitute councillors less and less often. That will be good for councillors, constituents and Members of Parliament alike.

I recognise, of course, that reducing the size of the House from 650 to 450 will mean people losing their jobs. I always used to be asked whether I was volunteering, and the answer was always no. The process should take place over a period. Whereas now the boundary commission's instructions always seem to lead to the House getting bigger, I suggest that we begin to reverse that trend so that the numbers start to fall, over time. We are all used to the painful processes of selection conferences, new boundaries, and so on, and we would eventually reach the target. It is important that we do so—for the House, for the quality of debate, and for the status of Members of Parliament and of councillors.

We should all start discussing the issue now. I used to be told that, if we took this route, the Labour party would lose every election. Interestingly, that is no longer usually said—although Conservative Members may be beginning to say it. When our party was doing badly and we were reduced to our heartlands, the saying may have been true, but no party need lose an election just because of the size of constituencies.

If my proposals involve changing the voting system, so be it—we shall have to face up to that. Proportional representation is not all it is cracked up to be, but no great issue of principle is involved. We simply need to get the system right.

I hope, Madam Deputy Speaker, that I have not strayed too far from the report. I end with a strong plea: it is vital to the workings of the House and to the roles of Members of Parliament and of councillors that we reduce the number of Members to about 450 over a period of years.

5.25 pm

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): I listened with some interest to the speech by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who suggested reducing the size of the House to 450 Members, but who preceded that suggestion with a complaint that his electorate—although he need not assume that he is going to win—after the election might number 83,000. If we reduced our numbers to 450, that would be the norm, not the exception.

I suppose that the boundary commission is rather like the cricket umpire. When he raises his finger, the player is meant to walk without questioning, as our cricketers do. Similarly, when the commission says that a ward is to be changed, we are meant to say amen to that. As the Home Secretary said, no one doubts the independence and integrity of the commission, but we sometimes doubt its logic.

In 1982, when I lived in the constituency of Ealing, North, the ward that I represented on Ealing council was transferred from Ealing, North to Ealing, Acton, even though the boundary commission received 1,500 representations saying that the ward should remain part of Ealing, North. The commission said, "No, you don't understand; you only live here. Of course it should be in Ealing, Acton." Now, under this review, the ward is being transferred back to Ealing, North from Ealing, Acton, and the commission claims that that is only logical. Apparently, what the commission takes away in one review it can put back in the next, and the logic that accompanies some of its reviews is less than 100 per cent.

I should like to take up the point made by the hon. Member for Hammersmith about the number of constituencies. There always seems to be an inbuilt bias in these reviews that results in increasing the size of the House ever so slightly. The boundary commission is told that the number of Members should not be substantially more or less than 613. When these various reviews are completed, there will be about 660 Members—8 per cent. above the target set for the commission. Every post-war boundary commission review has ended up increasing the size of the House.

Where will this stop? When will the term "substantially more" come into play? When will the commission decide not to create any more net constituencies? I hope that the Minister will deal with that question at the end of the debate, and that any future inquiry will take it into account. I see no case for increasing the size of the House yet again.

The role of the boundary commission is to equalise the number of votes in each constituency. We have heard the hon. Member for Hammersmith complain that the electorate in the constituency of which Hammersmith will be a part is to rise from 47,000 to 83,000. I can understand that complaint. If the hon. Gentleman represented a seat in Scotland, he would be taking up a new constituency, Glasgow, Shettleston, with an electorate of 48,792, or an old one, Paisley, North, with 49,418.

In London, there are the constituencies of Islington, North, with an electorate of 56,517, and of Islington, South and Finsbury, with 55,912. In London, the boundary commission has failed abysmally to equalise the value of votes. A vote in Islington will be worth much more than one in Croydon, Bromley or Hammersmith. The hon. Member for Hammersmith will have an electorate that is more than 59 per cent. greater than that of Islington, North or of Islington, South and Finsbury. There is an electoral quota of 69,281. The hon. Gentleman's constituency will be more than 20 per cent. above that quota. Other constituencies in London will be more than 20 per cent. below it. London has not been reviewed properly by the commission.

It is interesting to compare English seats with those in Scotland. I recognise that constituencies such as Western Isles and Orkney and Shetland must have a small electorate because they are geographically remote. However, there is no reason why urban constituencies in Glasgow should be significantly different from urban constituencies in London. My constituents wonder why my constituency is being chopped in two when Glasgow, Shettleston; Paisley, North; Glasgow, Govan; Glasgow, Cathcart; Glasgow, Pollok; Glasgow, Rutherglen; Glasgow, Baillieston; and Glasgow, Maryhill will have electorates of 48,000, 49,000, 50,000, 50,578, 51,411, 51,749, 52,225 and 52,584 respectively. The big one, boys, is Glasgow, Anniesland, with 52,624. Why should

seats in London with similar electorates to those to which I have referred—the new constituencies that will be created in Scotland—be dismembered?

We are trying to equalise the value of votes throughout the country and the commission has signally failed to do so. I hope that those who advocate devolution will examine the figures. They give the green light to changing the number of Members who sit in this place if we ever have regional government.

Many of us think that the London secretariats were set up in a thoroughly unsatisfactory way and that they should not be maintained for future boundary reviews. We were told at the beginning of the exercise that the commission would, with the exception of the London borough of Richmond, regard the Thames as a barrier to pairing London boroughs under the secretariats. What will happen? Secretariat No. 5—Barking and Havering, north of the Thames—will link with Bexley, Greenwich and Lewisham, south of the Thames. That is an example of the commission breaking its own rules. Given the way in which the secretariats in London were linked, London will end up with 74 Members rather than 71. When the commission next turns its attention to London, I hope that it will not assume automatically that the current secretariats are satisfactory for any further review.

The commission is bound to have regard for the size and shape of constituencies. I hope that I have shown that it has had little regard for the size of constituencies—we would not have such huge discrepancies within London if it had. The shape of some London constituencies also shows that the commission has had little regard for that consideration. If there is a Division, I have told my Whip that I shall have great difficulty in supporting the report. If I am absent, he will not be completely surprised.

5.33 pm

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and to the House, for not being in my place at the beginning of the debate. I was detained on Select Committee business.

It is a pleasure to be able to take up the remarks of the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall). I think that it is the first time that I have agreed with one of his speeches. No doubt it will be the last. During the time that I have been in the Chamber, he is the first Member to draw attention to the clear anomalies and flaws in the report. In his spirited consideration of the anomalies in the sizes of the constituencies, he set out the principal problems that my colleagues and I have with the report. Many of the failings of the report are common with the failings of previous boundary commission reports. It will come as no surprise to anyone in the Chamber to hear me say from the Liberal Democrat Bench that my colleagues and I regard the principle of shuffling the shapes and sizes of constituencies as entirely unsatisfactory when what is needed is a comprehensive review of the entire electoral system.

The way in which we are debating the issues and the way in which they have been taken up in the television interviews that I have watched lead me to think that we have rather missed the point. It has been an unedifying spectacle watching the right hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) and the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) reflecting in the nation's television studios on an electoral process in which their parties have had more or less success in effectively gerrymandering the boundaries. That approach is neither here nor there, but it would seem that Labour has had more success than the Conservatives had anticipated that it would have at the start of the process. That is not a consideration that the House should be bringing to bear. In fairness, the right hon. Lady made it clear that she was speaking in the light of the responsibilities that she undertakes for her party. It is for the House to consider the more technical arguments that the hon. Member for Hendon, South has raised.

Mr. Oliver Heald (Hertfordshire, North): Is the hon. Gentleman seriously saying that the Liberal Democrats do not take any interest in the political complexions of the constituencies concerned?

Mr. Harvey: That was not my point. I am not criticising other parties for taking such an interest. They should do so, and their local officials are bound to do so. We, however, should be making an objective assessment of the success or otherwise of the process. Other arguments need to be considered. We understand that those who speak as party officials have undertaken a job of work for their parties, and have rightly set about it. It is for the Chamber, in debating an order that has been put before it, to consider some of the technical flaws that I think are to be found in the report.

The most obvious flaw is to be found in the size of constituencies—a point to which the hon. Member for Hendon, South referred. Several hon. Members have said that, as a result of the review, in London, for the first time, seats will cross borough boundaries. That should offer scope for getting seats that are far more nearly balanced and matched in size than those that are proposed.

There is sometimes a case for rural seats to have fewer constituents because of their wider geographical spread. That does not apply to the constituencies of the London borough of Brent, which will return three Members each representing slightly more that 50,000 constituents. The Isle of Wight will be one seat with 102,000 constituents. That electorate will be represented by one Member. There is something horribly wrong when one seat can be twice the size of another in terms of the electorate that is represented, without the argument of a scattered or sparse population being brought to bear.

I shall dwell briefly on the Isle of Wight. The commission issued a press release stating that it would reappraise recommendations for constituencies throughout England

"to ensure fair and consistent consideration of one area compared with another."

It seems that the commission overlooked that when it came to the Isle of Wight. I hope that it will make a special case of the Isle of Wight for separate consideration, as it did of Milton Keynes during the previous Parliament.

I very much welcome the fact that the Home Secretary announced at the start of the debate that, after the boundary review has been completed, there would be further consideration of the rules that govern the work of the commission in its decisions about constituency boundaries. There is quite clearly a need for some further review of the rules and it would be better for those considerations to be undertaken at a separate time from a boundary review. As I have already mentioned, this is the first time that London borough boundaries have been

[Mr. Harvey]

crossed. I personally welcome that. I think that some of the London boroughs are somewhat artificial creations of the 1964 local government reorganisation in London, of which the London borough of Barnet, which is absolutely enormous, is an example in point. It might also be an opportunity to look at the point that was raised by the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), who said that, in each successive review, the number of Members being returned to this place is getting larger, and that nothing more than lip service—indeed, not even that—is being paid to the requirement to return a considerably smaller number of Members than we shall see in the next Parliament.

As well as the issue of numbers, there is the whole question of the representation of natural communities, a number of which have been ridden over roughshod in the process that we have just seen. Liverpool is having yet another dramatic shake-up, although it seems to have had one each time the boundary commission creates a review of any sort. In other areas, the growth in population has quite rightly resulted in new seats being created in some counties. In Dorset, for example, where a new Mid Dorset seat has been created, it would be fair to say that our local party officials have greeted the new boundary there with considerable optimism, because they think that it will help, for the first time in a general election, to bring more Liberal Democrat representation in that county.

There has, however, been a complete difference in the way in which some parts of the country have been looked at. For example, Swindon, in Wiltshire, has been cut in half, whereas Colchester, in Essex, which, traditionally, has had two seats—Colchester, South and Maldon; and Colchester, North—is to have only one. In the new boundary that has been drawn up, there is to be one central Colchester seat, with the hinterland going off into the various seats around it, so there is a slight inconsistency in the way in which different areas have been dealt with. Perhaps the rules that are to be reviewed might give more general guidance as to how those examples should be dealt with.

In addition, there are various other objections about the shape of particular seats, and the fact that communities have been chopped and changed. The hon. Member for Blackburn referred, rightly, to some of the extraordinary names that are given to constituencies and that cast little light on where they are to be found geographically.

I must momentarily refer to the fact that the arbitrary line that can be drawn by the boundary commissioner can have quite serious consequences on the political outcome at the election. In a particularly tight election, some of the more arbitrary bits of line drawing could have a quite dramatic effect on the composition of the House of Commons that came back afterwards. In those circumstances, we could almost have government by geographical accident rather than by popular vote.

Mr. John Carlisle: I think that the hon. Gentleman's last remark needs further investigation. He was suggesting that the commission should take into political consideration what he called the arbitrary line and that that could affect the way in which the election was going. Surely he must appreciate that the commission is totally non-political, and everybody in the House—apart from the Liberal party, perhaps—accepts that.

Mr. Harvey: The hon. Gentleman completely misunderstood my point. I was not for one moment suggesting that the decisions made by the boundary commission should be drawn up on the basis of a political calculation of the outcome. I was simply commenting that, as a matter of chance, the outcome of a casual flick of a pen here or there on a map could have a profound impact on the outcome of an election result. The basic point is that natural communities should be recognised and represented as such, and I hope that more consistent guidance can be given to the commission in the rules that are to be reviewed after the report has been concluded. Therefore, if there is consistency in the way in which the marginal decisions are made, it is less likely that anyone will turn around afterwards and feel that he has been a victim of an accident rather than the beneficiary of a consistent pattern of community representation.

The hon. Member for Blackburn referred, quite rightly, to the fact that, as a result of the boundary review, the number of votes that it will take to return a Conservative Member to this place will be less than that required to return a Labour Member. What he conveniently did not go on to point out, however, was that it will require a vastly larger number to return a Liberal Democrat Member. To take the argument further, the Green party, and other parties that are totting up quite a respectable number of votes nationally, get no representation here whatever.

When one looks further at the under-representation of women, ethnic minorities and so on, one realises that our whole electoral system has one conspicuous deficiency in that it simply does not give a true representation here of the make-up of our society or our communities. Nor, indeed, does it represent, in the balance of Parliament, the will of the public. How can it be right that a Government can be elected with only one in three of the British people's votes and yet have a majority in the House? How can it be right that, for 16 years, they have simply pushed through—steamrollered—every single one of their proposals, all bar one or two, on the basis of a mandate that comprises little more than one third of those who are entitled to vote? That is the biggest deficiency.

The whole business of those boundary reviews, which come along and change the boundaries on which elections are fought every 10 or 15 years, is really only tinkering at the edges of a system that is comprehensively and totally incapable of returning to this place a representation that accords with the wishes of the British people. That is why I very much welcome the commitment that was given by the leader of the Labour party: that any future Labour Government will take to a referendum the whole issue of electoral reform, which is long overdue. I hope that, whatever system of electoral reform might be arrived at, it will return a Chamber that represents much more accurately the political wish and the composition of society and the community at large.

A reformed electoral system would also ensure that the adversarial cockpit, which the Chamber too often becomes, would give way to a position where a larger number of parties were more prepared to recognise each other's policies, priorities and philosophies. There could be greater co-operation, in the national good, rather than

the adversarial system that we currently have and that, too often, puts party priorities above those of the nation as a whole.

It has been more than 160 years since the great Reform Act 1832, as it was known, was passed. It is time that the House began to consider the major constitutional reforms that are necessary rather than just updating and modernising a system that is fatally flawed at its heart and of which the report today is just another example in a long line.

5.48 pm

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells) need not hold his breath. Although I shall be expressing serious reservations about the work of the boundary commission in my area of England, if it comes to a vote this evening, I shall not be voting against the order, but I do hope that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will take the opportunity, for the reasons that I shall set out in my speech, to look again at some of the recommendations, and he has a specific opportunity to change them in some respects.

It was right that my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) emphasised the growing concern felt among English Members and English electors about the imbalance in representation in this place between hon. Members from Scotland, Wales and England. That is an acute problem now, which is causing a growing sense of resentment.

If—heaven forfend—the Opposition were to form a Government at some future stage and implement their half-baked plans for devolution to the regions of England and, above all, to Scotland and Wales, a fundamental rethink about that imbalance would be demanded. I hope that we shall hear a commitment from the Labour Front-Bench spokesman that if a Labour Government implemented devolution for Scotland and Wales they would reduce the proportion of seats for those two countries in this place.

I have a deep reservation, which seems to be widely shared in the House, about the steadily increasing numbers of Members that successive boundary commission reviews produce. I believe that as a result of the review before us the number will rise from 651 to 659, of which England's share will rise from 524 to 529.

At a time when we read that Members of Parliament are so unpopular—apparently we are second only to journalists in the unpopularity stakes—it seems more than a trifle perverse to create more of us. But be that as it may, we seem to be set on that course. However, for the sake of the good running of this place, if for no other reason, we should seek, not to increase but to reduce the number of Members of Parliament, and to give that reduced number increased resources with which to do their job.

As we have been reminded, a precedent for having 659 seats has been set, and indeed exceeded, in the past. A useful note from the Library reminds us that

"Between 1885 and 1918 the Commons had 670 MPs as there were 101 Irish MPs a number maintained by Gladstone in the 1885 Reform Act despite the fall in Irish population. This Act also awarded Scotland 12 extra seats in compensation, bringing its total to 70 (excluding university seats). However with the departure of Southern Ireland following the Government of Ireland Act 1920 the number of seats in the Commons fell back to 615 (including university seats) as Northern Ireland was represented by 12 Members (excluding the 1 university seat). Both the Speakers Conferences of 1916/1917 and 1994 had wanted the Commons size to be stabilised yet it has increased from 615 in 1935 to 659 today"—

that is, after the order takes effect.

A county such as Hereford and Worcester provides the House with an opportunity to move in the opposite direction, because we should not increase the number of seats in my county from seven to eight.

I have done my best to understand the curious electoral arithmetic that leads to the process of steadily increasing representation in the House. In the boundary commission report for England we read about the

"Theoretical Entitlement rounding up point"

and the

"Rounded number of seats".

My grasp of A-level maths was fairly sound—I got a reasonably good grade—and I was taught that one could not, as the boundary commission does as a result of the formula, round up 1.33 to 2. Moreover, one cannot round up 2.4 to 3, 3.429 to 4, 4.444 to 5, 5.455 to 6, 6.462 to 7 or, as has happened for Hereford and Worcester, 7.467 to 8. All those numbers should have been rounded down. If we could introduce a formula that enabled the boundary commission to do that, we would succeed in reducing the number of Members of Parliament—a result to be desired.

In Hereford and Worcester the result of those calculations is that our average number of electors per seat is 67,326—1,587 fewer than the English average. If I were to take you, Madam Deputy Speaker, on a journey along the M40 from my constituency to the House, we should first pass through Warwickshire, where the average number of electors per seat is 76,257—8,931 more than the average in Hereford and Worcester. In Oxfordshire, through which we would pass next, the average reaches 71,196 electors per seat—3,870 more than the average in Hereford and Worcester. In Buckinghamshire, rather nearer to London, the figure comes down to a more respectable 69,155—in line with the national quota set by the boundary commission, but 1,829 more than the figure for my county.

I contend that the boundary commission should not have introduced an extra seat in Hereford and Worcester. The report says:

"We were mindful that the introduction of an extra seat in Hereford and Worcester would make some major changes within the County inevitable".

It also, rightly, reminds the House that

"some 6,000 electors currently in the Borough of Bromsgrove will be transferred to the West Midlands at about the time this report is published. We decided that we should conduct an interim review as soon as practicable after 1 April 1995 to realign the Bromsgrove constituency boundary with the revised County boundary."

I understand the way in which the Act governing the boundary commission was set up, and the commissioners were forced into the ludicrous position that means that we are debating an order and a report that are already out of date, and are the subject of an immediate review.

Major change, which the boundary commission report admits that it is having to implement in my county, is unwelcome. The commissioners do not seem to acknowledge that fact, because the report says:

"the disruption and severance of established constituency links if eight seats were allocated, would not be severe."

[Mr. Peter Luff]

I have to tell them that they are simply wrong. The consequences have been extremely severe.

My rural wards from the district of Wychavon—Spetchley, Upton Snodsbury, Pinvin, Drakes Broughton, the Lenches and Inkberrow—feel especially sore about that, because successive boundary commission reviews have moved them around with an arbitrariness that I find shocking. It also causes real practical problems for the political parties in building lasting relationships, and associations and constituency parties that can stand the test of time. I resent the way in which those wards have been treated in the past and continue to be treated in the review.

Specifically about the city of Worcester, the report says:

"We noted that the electorate of the City of Worcester was 63,622, close to the county average. We therefore proposed a Worcester seat which would be coterminous with the City".

It also discusses at some length the delicious culinary ideas of "doughnutting" and "sandwiches", and describes what drove the commission to make certain decisions in particular parts of the country:

"On several occasions we provisionally recommended a constituency which comprised the town, with surrounding areas forming another constituency or constituencies. This arrangement was known as the 'doughnut'. In other areas we provisionally recommended that the town be split into two, often using a distinctive feature such as a river as a boundary, with each part being added to a rural hinterland. This arrangement was known as the 'sandwich'. . .

We had no single formula or policy for choosing between the alternatives but tried to find the best scheme for each town . . .

Factors which we take into account in considering the geography of an area include estuaries, major roads and other lines of communication such as railways and rivers which are easily identifiable borders but not necessarily physical barriers".

So sandwiches are entirely acceptable to the boundary commission.

I have a philosophical problem with some of the arrangements, because I believe that many of our county towns and cities have a close and intimate relationship with their rural hinterland. That is true for Worcester, and its Member of Parliament must understand that close relationship. I am concerned, however, that town and country are now growing further apart in our country. That is not a welcome development.

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): Does the hon. Gentleman think that the commission seems generally to have favoured the doughnut model rather than the sandwich? What are his thoughts on that? Would not the doughnut model reflect more truthfully the integrity of that relationship between the town and its surrounding villages?

Mr. Luff: No—precisely the opposite. My concern is that if a Member of Parliament represents an entirely urban seat with a rural sea around it, as happens with Worcester, a gulf of incomprehension will grow, and there will be a tendency not to understand the intimate links that exist between town and country.

For example, we have a cattle market in Worcester, which demonstrates the importance of the surrounding agricultural economy, but there are only about three farms within the city boundary. Typically, the entrepreneurs who create jobs in the city of Worcester live in the surrounding villages. The housing needs of south Worcestershire cannot be met by Worcester city alone but are met by the districts of Wychavon and Malvern Hills too.

Employment and commuting patterns are subtle and sophisticated in our county. Many people live in the villages and come into the city to work. Others live in the city and commute far afield, perhaps to Birmingham. The interest that we all have in a sound environmental policy and in well-planned rural areas for recreational purposes also militates in favour of a sandwich approach, not a doughnut approach, to electoral arrangements. Worcester, however, has been doughnutted. It should have been sandwiched because, to carry the gastronomic metaphor further, sandwiches breed mutual understanding; doughnuts breed misunderstanding.

Mr. John Marshall: And fat.

Mr. Luff: As my hon. Friend rightly reminds me, doughnuts also breed fat.

Another issue causes me concern in relation to the review: the Inkberrow rural ward is being arbitrarily lumped in with an urban region. It will form a tiny minority of that region and its interests stand to be overlooked as a result. In 1991, that ward had 2,415 voters. It contains a number of villages, of which the two largest are Inkberrow and Cookhill.

According to the boundary commission's provisional recommendations, it received quite a lot of representations about the proposed inclusion of Inkberrow in a new Redditch constituency, although it is coy on the exact figure. It says:

"Our provisional proposal to include Inkberrow with the whole of Redditch Borough to form the Redditch seat was an attempt to create a seat which would have an electorate of 60,193, well below the electoral quota, but higher than the Redditch Borough wards alone . . . The Assistant Commissioner considered that there was a choice between creating an undersized seat or incorporating Inkberrow to create a seat of just sufficient size. He weighed up the arguments put to him both for and against our provisional recommendation, and on balance decided there was no good reason to propose an alternative arrangement to what we had provisionally proposed".

The commission, however, had the integrity to admit that, among the representations on its revised recommendations, was a petition containing 198 signatures objecting to the proposal to include Inkberrow in the new Redditch constituency. That figure must be borne against the total number of representations received from the whole county of Hereford and Worcester to the boundary commission's original recommendations; those representations totalled 614. It seems that the boundary commission is swayed more by the number of letters it receives than by the people who are aggrieved by its findings. That is a matter of considerable concern.

Frankly, the Conservative party missed a trick in some parts of the country. The Labour party organised a letter-writing campaign—a mass of individual letters dictated from some central party machine—and we did not do the same.

Mr. John Carlisle: My hon. Friend should add the point about petitions. Most of us in this place on both sides of the House agree that petitions are sometimes, to say the least, spurious. Names such as Julius Caesar and others have appeared on petitions that I have received. We

take little notice of such names, but the commission has taken enormous notice of petitions. I wonder whether it had the time to go through the names and to ascertain whether the people petitioning it were relevant to the constituency concerned.

Mr. Luff: My hon. Friend's intervention suggests a certain disparity of experience around the country. My complaint is that the Inkberrow petition appears to have been ignored totally by the boundary commission.

Mr. Carlisle: Was Julius Caesar on it?

Mr. Luff: I do not think that he was. I believe that the petition was organised by the parish council. I am sure that my hon. Friend would not wish to call into question the integrity of the clerk to Inkberrow parish council.

Inkberrow is a distinct community, separate from Redditch. I do not wish to disparage Redditch or its people, but it is a new town, something of a cuckoo in the Worcestershire nest, and the people of Inkberrow live in a predominantly rural area. It is the home of the Old Bull public house, the model for the Bull in "The Archers" at Ambridge. There is a sense of outrage among the people of Inkberrow at their totally arbitrary inclusion in an otherwise urban constituency.

The parish council, the district council and my friend Councillor Gordon Moone have expressed that outrage to me. Wychavon district council has expressed deep concern at the proposal. It means that just one ward of Wychavon district council will be in the parliamentary constituency of Redditch but all its other wards will be in two other hon. Members' constituencies. There will unnecessarily be three constituencies instead of two.

The people of Inkberrow ask themselves what the consequences of the proposal will be. I know that the boundary commission's report says that there is no read across to local authority boundaries, but their deep concern is that the logic of the decision will inevitably flow in that direction and that they will find themselves sucked into the urban region of Redditch for planning purposes as well, which they deeply resent.

Inkberrow looks to Worcester and Evesham, not to Redditch. It has no natural community with Redditch. Evidence was presented to the boundary commission, which the assistant commissioner chose to believe, that Inkberrow did look to Redditch, but that evidence came entirely from the Labour party, which recognised that its arguments for an eighth seat in the county and its chance of gaining some marginal seats would be diminished if the assistant commissioner decided that he could not recommend the creation of a Redditch seat. It was prepared to endorse the provisional recommendations simply for partisan purposes. The people of Inkberrow should not be made to pay that particular partisan price.

I canvassed in Inkberrow during the European elections. How much the people of this country care about European issues as opposed to, say, mortgage tax relief, is a matter of debate among Conservative Members. During those elections, people in Inkberrow were interested not in European matters but entirely in the boundary commission's recommendations, which appalled them.

We have an opportunity to correct the injustice. As I said at the beginning of my remarks, there is to be an immediate further review of Hereford and Worcester constituencies as a result of a transfer of Frankley into Birmingham. That opportunity should be used to correct this enormous injustice. The boundary commission and the Home Secretary have a simple choice. They could use a different ward arbitrarily to make up the numbers in Redditch. There are precedents for that. Not so long ago, the parliamentary constituency in which Redditch was included was known as Bromsgrove and Redditch and wards to the west of Redditch were part of that constituency, yet the boundary commissioner has chosen to integrate into Redditch a completely new ward that has no historical relationship with Redditch. The alternative—and this underlines the point of principle about which a number of hon. Members have spoken—is to consider the possibility of creating a smaller constituency. If we left out the Inkberrow ward, Redditch would have 57,778 voters, on 1991 figures.

We have heard the figures for the Brent constituencies: the number of voters in those constituencies total 56,812, 55,433 and 59,070 in one large one. We have heard the figures for the Islington constituencies: 55,650 and 54,443 voters. We have heard that there are two Scottish seats with electorates below 50,000 and 15 largely urban Scottish seats—the new Redditch constituency would also be largely urban—with smaller electorates than Redditch would have without Inkberrow.

Incidentally, my counter-proposal would be to transfer the Redditch ward into the new Mid Worcestershire constituency. That would increase its electorate only from 63,596 to 66,011—still well below the quota set by the boundary commission.

My plea to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Minister is this: please ask the boundary commission to reconsider the proposal and to use the opportunity provided by the review of the Bromsgrove and Frankley boundaries to give Inkberrow some sense of justice. I declare an interest: I love Inkberrow a great deal. The people of it are being treated badly.

6.7 pm

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): I do not know what this statutory instrument does for the people of Inkberrow, but it represents the sentence of political death for a number of hon. Members, and nothing concentrates the mind of politicians more than impending political death. I join a debate in which a number of the politically undead are involved, but of course, associating with zombies has always been something that I have been happy to do in this place.

I compliment the Labour party and David Gardner, who was our national official in charge of making representations and of organising local areas to make representations to the commissioners. He and the Labour party did an excellent job. The various accusations that have been thrown from the Conservative Benches about Stalinism and centralised direction merely show how thoroughly my party did the job on this occasion. I congratulate all those concerned.

From a local point of view, I am pleased that the commissioners have recommended that the old Newham, North-West constituency should be changed to West Ham. The local people always wanted their constituency to be called West Ham or East Ham. They still feel like West Hammers or East Hammers, following the lines of the old county boroughs of Essex. The change has been welcomed by the people of the east end.

[Mr. Tony Banks]

I said in an intervention that it is a slight pity that West Ham football club is still located in East Ham but, of course, one cannot have everything in life. From my point of view, it means that the new West Ham constituency will be more or less the old West Ham, South constituency, which was represented by Keir Hardie. Anyone in my party who is associated with that name is a proud person and that is exactly how I feel now.

There are some criticisms. I am concerned about the crossing of borough boundaries in London for the first time. Communities mean a great deal. London is not just one large conurbation, but a series of villages and constituencies. Unfortunately, the new Poplar and Canning Town constituency that is recommended in the order will mean the crossing of borough boundaries and the linking of communities that had previously no great affinity one with the other.

Anyone who understands the history of the east end can appreciate how people on the Isle of Dogs feel about not being linked with the southern part of Newham. I understand why it has been done: it is to try to build up constituency sizes, but it is a regrettable development in London and the first time that we have had to face it. We do not welcome it. The change in that Newham boundary means changing one of the oldest boundaries in London. The boundary of the Lea, particularly at Stratford, marks the crossing between the City of London and the county of Essex. There are many historical reasons why that boundary was maintained, but it is now to be crossed. The House should not welcome that, although I accept the necessity for it.

My other criticism is that the boundary commissioners, when they took other matters such as community into account, were interested only in equalising numbers in terms of representation. When we examine the numbers involved, our concern gathers pace. First, the bases for calculating population were mid-1991 and the census returns. In London, and particularly in Newham, we have strong grounds for believing that the census figures were inaccurate. After the census data were published, the census office conducted additional checks in my area, which showed that 5,000 people were missing from the published total of 212,170. That gave Newham a mid-year population in 1991 of 217,000.

Many people are missing from the census figures and, even more worrying, from the electoral register. Personal experiences are always worth while. At my advice sessions on Fridays, we check the names of the people arriving against the electoral register. It is worrying that many of those who come to the sessions are simply not on the register. We give them a form to complete and send to the electoral registration officer at the town hall. That is a useful exercise which over a year can bring more accuracy to the register, but it is worrying to note the number of one's constituents who are not on the register. I do not say to such people, "You are not on the register and not eligible to vote, so push off," any more than I would say to people who I knew had voted Tory—not that many do in Newham—that I am not there to represent them. A Member of Parliament has to represent whoever comes through his door, provided that person resides in his constituency. It should cause concern that a large number of people, particularly in inner-city areas such as those in London, are not registered.

During the opening speeches there were some exchanges about the method of registration. It is absurd that in this day of high-tech we still use an electoral register to give people eligibility to vote and underpin our democracy. It is worth remembering that people gave their lives so that the vote would be available to the largest number of people through universal suffrage. Surely in 1995 we can find a better way of registering people. Everyone has a national insurance number, so why cannot people have voter eligibility numbers or some sort of smart card way to register for votes? When people go to vote, they have only to prove residency and I am sure that large numbers of people would not decamp from one area to another to influence voting in particular constituencies. Many safeguards could be built into a more flexible method, to ensure that people did not do that.

The electoral register is crucial. The issue that should concentrate the mind of every hon. Member, from whatever party he comes, is that we are still prepared to accept this rather archaic method of compilation. It is an offence not to complete a registration form, but how many people have been fined for not completing one? The answer is probably a big zilch, but it would be interesting if the Minister could provide the answer.

The personal point for every hon. Member is the reality of the changes and what they will mean for us. Some hon. Members will leave the House altogether. That is terminal, and I can understand why some hon. Members are concerned about that: I would be concerned. Those whose constituencies have dramatically increased in size will recognise that there are implications for the work load, and it is right for us to raise those issues in the context of the report.

We get a bad press and it is worth telling people the sort of problems that we face when such a measure comes to the House. The order looks dull and arid, but it means a great deal to individual hon. Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) made that point very well. As I said, the commission is especially concerned about equality of representation, in terms of the number of people necessary to elect someone to the House. When my constituency had 46,500 people, it had about half the electorate of the Prime Minister's constituency. I maintain that more problems arrive in my office from 46,500 east-enders than the Prime Minister would ever get from the 96,000 people in his constituency.

Some Conservative Members shake their heads. People may write to the Prime Minister because that is what he is, but I am convinced that what I say is true. In an area as impoverished as mine in the east end, I am bound to get more problems about housing, social security, visas and so on than someone with a substantially more prosperous rural constituency. That is anecdotal and I should be quite happy to see the House apply its abilities to analyse the matter somewhat more closely.

Sir David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): My hon. Friend the Member for Luton, North (Mr. Carlisle) will confirm that a large number of Londoners have moved to Bedfordshire with exactly the same problems as they had in the hon. Gentleman's seat.

Mr. Banks: Of course I understand that. I am not suggesting that the case burdens of Conservative Members are not as large as mine. I merely said that equality of numbers is important from the point of view of

representation. But in terms of the work load of individual Members, one cannot just compare 96,000 people in Huntingdon with 46,000 people in the east end in Newham, North-West. People in my area come to me with far more problems than people would have in a rural constituency such as that represented by the Prime Minister. That is fairly obvious, but at some point perhaps the House could look at the matter, because it is crazy that we are all given the same resources, notwithstanding the different work loads with which we have to deal.

In the new West Ham constituency, seven wards of the old Newham, North-West constituency have remained and to them have been added three of the old wards from Newham, South. Bemersyde has brought in 4,372 additional voters; Hudsons has brought in 7,147; and Plaistow has brought in 6,381, making an additional 17,900 voters. Those figures are to be added to the 46,500 people in the old Newham, North-West, producing a constituency of 64,445 registered voters.

That means that the work load with which my office will have to deal will increase by 40 per cent. No one has said anything about additional resources, yet those extra people will come to surgeries with exactly the same sort of problems as those already in Newham, North-West. What other job could one think of, the work load of which increased by 40 per cent., but no additional resources were made available? People allocated such an additional burden would rightfully feel that they had had a pretty rum deal and would be very angry about it. That is precisely how I feel—not only personally, but on behalf of the people who work for me in my office in Stratford.

At the moment, as Members of Parliament, we get a fairly bad press. Therefore, it is even more incumbent on us to spell out the reality of being a Member of Parliament today to people outside this place. We may decide to accept all the cases that come through our doors, or, like my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith, refer council cases first to the local council. I do not refer cases. Everyone who comes through the door comes to see me as a Member of Parliament and I take those cases. That means that more than 60 per cent. of my case load relates to housing matters.

If I were to refuse to deal with or—rather—refer people who have a council-inspired problem, my work load would lessen. But I do not think that I should do that. I am full time; councillors are not. People come to see the Member of Parliament, not the councillor. It is right to detail that point in the context of the report because, for us in the constituencies, the reality of its dry figures is stark and dramatic.

I welcome the report. I am one of the survivors, so naturally I would welcome it. I understand that others might not be so open-handed in their greeting of the report, having found that their constituencies are disappearing or having to compete with others and losing out. We should have a further extensive debate about the report's implications for the work load of Members of Parliament. If we did that, we would be treating the subject with the seriousness that it deserves.

6.21 pm

Mr. Hartley Booth (Finchley): I have listened to the debate with great interest. I was very impressed with the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff)—soon to become the former hon. Member for Worcester, representing Inkberrow and Worcester. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was interesting in praising the fact that he would be representing the heritage of Keir Hardie. He did not make it clear, however, whether that was of greater significance than his detachment from the football club that he obviously supported.

Mr. John Carlisle: He does not support West Ham. He is a Chelsea man.

Mr. Booth: He does not support West Ham.

I have been forced to speak, not because of my own position in Finchley. I do not wish to make any personal points about the boundary of my constituency. I did not submit any objection. Given the common agreement between the two Front-Bench teams, despite some disagreement on points of especial detail, I want to point out the way in which the commission and its whole process have become so bogged down in the detail, that it is as if its eminent and learned members, who are detached from the parliamentary process but bound by statute, have reached the stage where they cannot see the wood for the trees. A number of situations are best described as a Horlicks.

The first point that appears perfectly obvious to anyone who looks at the detail is that the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986—the basis of the report—states as its anchor that there should not be a substantially greater number than 613 constituencies. Following the report, there are 47 seats more than that number. Is the number of 47 seats not considered substantial? If we said that to the Chief Whips of the Conservative and Labour parties, would not they become incendiary? Is it not the case that 47 seats make up more than twice our current majority, with which we have been working for five years? The figure is obviously substantial, yet the report has proceeded with blind disregard of what is a common interpretation of the English language.

Let us consider only the English seats. The 1986 Act says—effectively—that there should not be a substantially greater number than 488. Following the report, there are to be 524 seats. That is an increase of 36 seats in England alone. Of course that is a substantial increase. I hope that the review announced by my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will take that on board. It is an anomaly and it is absurd.

I wish to apply our minds to London. An average number of 69,281 registered voters in each constituency was set at the enumeration date of 21 February 1994. The boundary commission announced that it would apply a margin—in other words, a rise or a fall below 69,000—of 12,500 people. Having set its own rules, it proceeded on many occasions to break them, which is very unsatisfactory. The constituency of Hammersmith, as we have heard, contains 83,000 people, Orpington contains 82,000 people, Croydon, North and Croydon, South contain 80,000 people each—right on the margin—and Croydon, Central contains 81,000 people. The number of people in Islington has swung the other way. Islington, North contains 55,000 people and Islington, South and Finsbury 54,000. Together with Brent and others, those constituencies are all examples of the way in which the commission set itself some rules and then broke them.

The situation gets worse. The commission divided London into four working groups or secretariats, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South

[Mr. Booth]

(Mr. Marshall) referred. Each of those working groups or secretariats contained three or four boroughs and the commission admitted in writing that the configuration of the secretariats would have an inhibiting effect on how it would conduct the review. Then the commission purported to consult over the establishment of those secretariats. In fact, there was no full consultation with the public at all. On the contrary, the nature of the secretariats was concealed from possible interested parties. Subsequently, contradicting itself, the commission claimed that the secretariats were merely for administrative convenience. Then why consult at all, or purport that it might be consulting?

The commission also decided that it would not cross any borough boundaries—another inhibition on its process. Did we allow for that in the 1986 Act, in which we provided for its establishment? Not at all. It is all part of the so-called discretion that it has been given. Or is it there at all? It is a grey area and needs to be considered carefully in the review of the rules.

If the issue is not analysed properly and does not have democratic support, a number of problems could result. Arbitrarily designed secretariats are, in effect, mini-counties, which would be a precedent for future realignments of boundaries and other local government functions. It is not satisfactory for what is effectively a quango to create new local government divisions without the sanction of the House.

The mother of Parliaments has developed for 700 years. Two days from now, on 16 June, some of us will remember 16 June 1216 when, if our records are correct, the Magna Carta—the treaty between the king and the barons—was signed. We have this proud tradition, yet here we are in this supposedly perfect mother of Parliaments with a process that is riddled with anomalies. Perhaps it is the mother of Parliaments, but it is showing many signs of arthritis.

6.31 pm

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): I have no complaint about the work of the commission and the report that it has produced. As far as my self-interest is concerned, the seat of Derbyshire, North-East will remain exactly the same.

There is one great problem with the report, however, because it is based on flawed information. Generally, the principle is to act according to electoral quotas and to decide the appropriate boundaries along the lines of those quotas, taking into account other communal considerations. The building blocks—electoral registers—are seriously flawed. If that flaw were random and were spread throughout the country, and if similar proportions of electors were missing all over the place, it would make no difference to this report. It would be a serious problem, but it would not affect the report. That is not the case, however, as the type of people who are missing from the electoral registers in the greatest number are unevenly distributed. The number of people entitled to be on the electoral register does not tie in with the principles used to redraw the boundaries.

Who are the people who are not registered? One problem is with the role of registration officers, who lack the considerable resources required and are often unable to engage in the necessary canvassing activities to check that they have the right people down on the register. Advertising to encourage people to get themselves on to the electoral register is very poor. Compare it with the advertisements for the various privatisations and the fancy employment schemes, or the attempts to convince people that the Government are doing a reasonable job. It is a democratic disgrace that we do not engage in massive activity to encourage as full a registration as possible.

Obvious problem areas need to be confronted, such as the difficulty of getting homeless people on electoral registers. It is not the case that a homeless person is ineligible, but he or she must be able to claim to be associated with an area to be registered there, which presents massive difficulties. How much canvassing of homeless people do registration officers undertake to encourage them to be on the registers? Homeless people are unevenly distributed, so the shortage is more serious in some areas than in others.

Our method of compiling the register is antiquated and inadequate for the nature of our society. We register people in October and the registers are published four months later in February. By the time they are published, they are already out of date. They remain in use for a further 12 months, becoming more and more out of date during that time. If someone finds that they have not been registered on the qualifying date in October, they can be added to the register, but they cannot be added to a register if they move to a different area. So a register is 16 months out of date by the time that it is finished with and a new register takes over—a new register that is already four months out of date.

This system means that masses of people are missing from electoral registers. As I stressed, no provision is made for adding people to fresh registers when they move to a new area, or for taking them off the register in another area. The likelihood of gaining a postal vote is restricted if someone has moved to a new area.

Not only are the arrangements for determining who gets on registers inadequate, but, in recent years, the majority in this House has deterred people from registering. The poll tax was the biggest constitutional disgrace of all as regards electoral registration. It had its own register, linked to the electoral register, and it became known that the electoral register was the first place that the registrar checked if one's name was not on the poll tax register. As a result, there was a serious decline in electoral registration, especially among young people who were coming up for registration for the first time—a group of people known as attainers.

The attainer element of the register collapsed. If people wanted to duck out of paying the poll tax because of the great burden placed on households made up of a large number of people, the young person coming on to the register for the first time was the most likely to be missed off, as their name could not be checked from previous electoral registers.

The House has taken action to destroy the electoral register and it has not taken action to update electoral registration techniques in line with the needs of modern society. When we consider the measure in front of us, we must take that serious failure into account.

Who is missing from the electoral register? Figures that I have obtained from the House of Common's Library show that, since 1983, registration has collapsed by

2.7 per cent. of those eligible in England and Wales and 2 per cent. of those eligible in Scotland. Those are serious figures which are not based upon some random development throughout society. Only 88.6 per cent. of those eligible in Greater London are registered, while the figure for England and Wales—bad as it is—is 95 per cent. Furthermore, within London there are pockets of serious problems. I realise that within the eligible potential population, there is a small element of overseas visitors who must be removed from the total figure. That will affect areas such as the City of Westminster, but the fact that the City of Westminster has only 67.3 per cent. of its potential eligible population registered needs close examination.

Other areas that are more than 15 per cent. short in terms of registration—these are local government areas, as that is the only way in which figures can be compiled—include Haringey with 82.5 per cent., Hackney with 82.9 per cent., Camden with 81.3 per cent. and Brent with 81.3 per cent. In Brent, the Labour party threatened action through the courts unless extra action was taken by electoral registration officers to conduct proper canvassing to advance the figures recorded for that area.

The figures for those missing from the register are likely to be much higher in urban areas than in rural areas. An important survey on electoral registration was conducted in 1991 by Steven Smith of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The survey contains some important details as to who is missing from electoral registers. The report says that, on the best estimates, between 7.4 per cent. and 9 per cent. of people in private households in England and Wales are missing from the electoral register. That is a massive number of people, and a democracy should be concerned about those figures.

Mr. Tony Banks: May I pay tribute to the work that my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) has done on this issue for a considerable time? He has been indefatigable in his pursuit of those missing people. Why does he think that he is a lone voice? Why are his concerns not shared by more Members? This issue is one of the most significant problems facing our democracy, yet it seems at times that my hon. Friend is a lone voice in the wilderness.

Mr. Barnes: In the sense that that is a compliment, I thank my hon. Friend. There should be a massive awareness by Labour Members of Parliament that this is one of the most serious issues facing democracy. We can talk about proportional representation, fancy franchises and different forms of constitutional change, but at the bottom of all that should be the provision that everybody should be on a register. That would be even more important in a proportional system, as the register would have to be correct to determine that the result was correct. I am not a lone voice. The other place had a debate recently about the state of the electoral register, and that House does not even have Members who are elected. We should be concerned about these matters.

Before I conclude, I wish to stress the figures for some areas in the survey of missing voters. The rate of missing voters generally is between 7.4 per cent. and 9 per cent. The figure for inner London was 20.4 per cent., while for outer London it was 10.3 per cent. For young people in the 21 to 24 age group the figure was 20.6 per cent., while for the over-50 group it was 2.1 per cent. More men than women are missing, with 8.3 per cent. of men and 6.1 per cent. of women missing. Those who had moved in the year preceding the census accounted for 27.6 per cent. The figure for new Commonwealth citizens was 36.6 per cent. compared with 6.4 per cent. for United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and old Commonwealth citizens. The figure for black people was 24 per cent., compared with a figure for white people of 6.5 per cent.

Members can look in detail at the survey, which shows that the figure is likely to be higher for those in private rented accommodation than for owner-occupiers. The figure for those in private rented properties is slightly smaller than the figure for those in council housing or housing association properties. There is obviously a massive social divide contained within the numbers who are missing.

If my interest appears altruistic in terms of my saying that the franchise should be right and that everybody should have the vote, it also turns out to be in my interest as well and is associated with my political position. It turns out that the people missing from the register are more likely to have a grouse against the Government than anyone else. It is matter to which we shall return.

We will certainly need legislation to provide measures such as a rolling electoral register which allows people to be added and removed as they move in and out of an area. If a person dies, he can be removed from the register so that he is not sent electoral addresses during elections. We must face all these matters solidly. Only when we get a proper electoral register with 100 per cent. registration of those who are entitled to be on it will we be in a position to divide up the cake around constituency boundaries as the report has done. Let us go back to basics, and get the basic elements right. We can then accept the work of the commission, which will provide equitable constituencies for us all.

6.46 pm

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): I hope that the hon. Member for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) will forgive me if I do not go down the same path as he took. We have heard him before on the subject, and my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess) and I were regular attenders at what used to be called the summer Adjournment debates where we heard the hon. Gentleman on this subject. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) was quite right to say that the hon. Gentleman deserves credit. This is a subject about which he knows a lot, and he speaks on it with passion.

I must apologise to the House and to my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, whose speech I missed. I was also a little late for the speech of the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw). The reason for that was that I was detained regrettably in the dentist's chair. It was regrettable because of the pain which was caused to me at the time, but also because of a comment from my dentist. When I told him that I had to get away to speak on a boundary commission report which affected my seat to such an extent that certain people believed that it could mean my removal from this House, he insisted that I paid before I left because of my future employment prospects.

I shall make a short contribution to an interesting debate. What an extraordinary place this is. Here we have a virtually empty Chamber during a rather low-key debate, and those who have reached higher places than I

[Mr. John Carlisle]

am ever likely to—they are known as Whips—are rushing around either trying to encourage people to speak, or to prevent them from speaking so that the House can rise early for a good dinner, on a matter which will affect not just the employment prospects of Members but millions of people outside. It is something of an insult to the commission that the House has not seen fit to be better attended for the debate on a report which was a long time in coming and which has caused a lot of controversy. Members from whatever side of the political spectrum, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff), have made their representations and pleaded their case by talking about numbers. The number of Members who have attended this debate is disgraceful. It is a sad reflection on the House that we shall not spend more time on and pay greater attention to a measure that will affect many people's representation in Parliament.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Will my hon. Friend mention the fact that, at the end of this long debate, in which emotions have been aroused, there will be no vote, so those who are disappointed with the boundary commissioners' recommendations cannot express their hostility? That is quite wrong.

Mr. Carlisle: Whether there is a vote will depend on others. I shall keep the Whip on tenterhooks by not saying what I intend to do until the end of my speech. That will at least get his attention—I am sure that he would always pay attention to what I have to say—and the attention of the House, which may be tempted to drop off at this stage.

It is a pity that more hon. Members are not present and that this debate is not being fought at a higher level, particularly given the quality of speakers so far.

I must speak briefly about a matter of personal interest on the basis of the commission's recommendations for my constituency and Bedfordshire. I am glad to see that my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Sir D. Madel) is present. It would be churlish of me to criticise the report and its consequences on my electoral prospects and, more importantly, the prospects of my constituency. The commission has recommended that the town of Luton return to its pre-1983 position, with two seats in a predominantly—in my case totally—urban environment. It would be churlish of me to object to that proposal as I was among those who supported unitary status for Luton. I was delighted when the Secretary of State accepted the local government commission's recommendation that Luton should enjoy unitary status. Two seats in Luton was, therefore, an appropriate decision at that time. However, the recommendation means certain difficulties and disappointments among my supporters. It could also mean my departure from this place.

Before Opposition Members rub their hands with too much glee, may I recount a short tale of what happened at the recent local government elections, which were not the outstanding success that the Conservative party had forecast. Indeed, we were down to just two ward seats in my constituency: one won by the princely number of 30 and the other by a majority of only 10. As I was expressing some downheartedness at that result, a group of Labour supporters, all of Asian origin and wearing Labour rosettes, assured me that I was not to worry about the disasters befalling the Tory party that night, nor about the boundary changes. They said, "You, Mr. Carlisle, are bound to win because you are a fixture in Luton." So I would obviously have support from the Labour party in my town, should I be considered as a candidate again.

I wish to raise three matters about the commission and its report. The first is about membership of the commission. Tribute has rightly been paid to the commission and its staff for the job that they did, which was not easy. May I suggest to my hon. Friend the Minister that it would be worth while including on the commission two or possibly more former Members of this place? In many cases, in its anxiety to be fair and make its recommendations purely on the numbers game, the commission has taken little account—because it did not know about it—of what it means to represent constituents, and what it means to constituents when their lives are turned upside down by what the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) called an arbitrary rule of the pen.

May I use as an example two villages in my constituency, Toddington and Barton, which, before 1983, were in the constituency of Bedfordshire, South-West. In 1983 they were put in the Luton, North constituency and it is now proposed that the good people of that village should join a new Mid Bedfordshire constituency. They are totally confused because they will have had three different Members of Parliament in a short time. Naturally, they have built up enormous loyalties with their Member of Parliament yet, by the stroke of a pen, they will now be switched away to another constituency after only a short time. That is damaging to them.

Sir David Madel: I share my hon. Friend's anxiety. The residents of Toddington and Barton are almost dizzy with those changes. Does my hon. Friend agree that they are confused also because this time they will enter a parliamentary constituency that forms part of a separate district council? The commission should have shown a little more sensitivity. I hope that this is the last time that it messes about with Bedfordshire for some time.

Mr. Carlisle: I share my hon. Friend's sentiments. Even district changes upset people as they become accustomed to their representation and local council. Although, strictly speaking, those changes will not take place here, any change in local government and national representation upsets existing arrangements and loyalties are sometimes stretched.

I therefore suggest that when a new commission is formed it should include, among the great lawyers and so on, former Members of this place who could advise the commission on the effects of changes to parliamentary boundaries in a non-political way and point out the difficulties, some of which have been outlined on the Floor of the House tonight. I am glad to see my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary here to hear those words.

My second point about the commission's report is that Bedfordshire was the first county council constituency up for consideration and the commission returned to the pre-1983 position, which my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr. Luff) described as doughnutting rather than sandwiching. In political terms that was almost bound, by the old definition, to have had some effect on its political make-up, as doughnuts were always seen to favour the Labour party whereas sandwiches were seen to favour the Conservative party. Thank heavens that this debate has, on the whole, stayed away from pure party politics.

Even in my constituency, the parliamentary boundaries of which cross three different district councils, after the initial problems of mixing rural with urban an enormous understanding has developed between the two communities. I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester, who said that he wanted his villages to remain villages and have nothing to do with the nearby town—I think that he was referring to Redditch. It is good to have a mixed representation so that those who live in villages join, in political associations or whatever, other members of their constituency and understand that those who live in towns also have problems, and those who live in tower blocks in the towns can see that there are problems in the villages. The hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) should know that just because some of us represent areas of lush green pastures where the problems may be different from those in urban areas, they are just as intense. Moreover, the representations that we receive, either in person at our advice surgeries or by correspondence, are just as great. However, no one underestimates the amount of work that he puts into his constituency.

Since 1983, we have built up a happy relationship between the two communities, which took some doing. But that will now be shattered by an arbitrary rule of numbers and a stroke of the pen. It is a pity because those sandwiched constituencies brought a greater variety to the House and gave the hon. Members concerned a far broader interest, from farming to heavy industry and from rural housing to urban housing. They made us better representatives and gave us a better understanding of other people's problems than if we had represented the narrow confines of a purely urban or rural constituency. In areas like mine in Bedfordshire, there was an opportunity to continue that through the division of numbers, but the commission chose doughnutting not only in Luton but, after an appeal, in Bedford. That has meant that in Bedfordshire, we now have three borough constituencies and three county constituencies, whereas previously we had four county constituencies and one borough. It is a pity that that balance has been broken.

Another fact must be considered. Those of us in whose constituencies dramatic changes are made must rightly continue to represent constituents, from wherever they come, and perform our duties for them between now and the next general election. That will be a difficult time for many of us, when the people in our old constituency will have moved away to new pastures.

The third and last argument that I wish to present to the House concerns numbers. It is remarkable that, in many of the earlier speeches, an almost unanimous anxiety was expressed that the number of constituencies has increased. Questions have been rightly asked as to why the commission chose to increase the numbers, and to do so at a time when the general consensus of the House would appear to be that those numbers should decrease.

I would be very much in favour of having fewer Members in the House, and if that meant that I had to leave, so be it. I have had 16 years, which I have thoroughly enjoyed. If those numbers decrease, it will help to shrink the ever-growing snowball of government.

I must say to my hon. Friends the Ministers that it is sad to see Governments now, with so many junior Ministers and Ministers of State littered about the Government like nobody's business, with everyone having a parliamentary private secretary and so on and with the whole apparatus of government.

I remember that, when Baroness Thatcher—for whom I continue to have great admiration—at that famous victory in 1979, crossed the steps of No. 10, she quoted Francis of Assisi, but she also said:

"I seek better government, but less of it."

I regret to say that that is one argument that I would have with the noble Baroness—that the amount of government has increased, and government is interference in people's lives. I should like the number of Ministers to be cut by half, and the number of Members of Parliament reduced considerably.

I believe that we are as capable of representing 85,000 to 90,000 people as we are capable of representing 60,000 to 65,000 people. My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), with more than 100,000 constituents, is no less capable of representing those numbers than was our friend, now Sir William Benyon, in Milton Keynes, where the number of constituents shot up to more than 100,000. It did not lessen his representation in this place, and I believe that we could take on—I would welcome it—additional work on that basis.

Numbers should not necessarily be the criterion. Let us hope that this is the last time that a commission reports that numbers should be increased.

As a parting shot, I must comment on the speech of my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold). I am sorry that she is not in the Chamber because, as she said, she spoke really as a deputy chairman of the Conservative party rather than for her constituency. Blind loyalty to my leader, to the chairman of the party and certainly to my political following—I have no longer any political aspiration—prevents me from saying what I should perhaps say, and what some people have said to me, regarding the way in which Conservative central office has handled the whole affair.

In fairness to my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden and indeed to my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), the chairman of the Conservative party, they were very late on the scene and they were handed something of a poisoned chalice.

I was interested to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden say that constituency associations in the Conservative party, unlike in the Labour party, were totally autonomous, made their own decisions and in effect were not answerable to central office. If only that had been the case during the recent argument about the funds that were going to the European Community, when nine of my hon. Friends were suspended from the Whip, and when area chairmen were ringing round the chairmen of those of us who were considering voting against the Government and saying that, if that was the case, we would not be allowed in the constituency office, we would have to be deselected and so on. That does not smack to me too much of associations being allowed the opinions of their own members. That was a small aside, which I am sure that my right hon. Friend will take in the best of humour; she always does.

[Mr. Carlisle]

I cannot say that I welcome the report. It would be somewhat churlish to do so. Like a turkey, today I may be voting for a very early Christmas. Having said that, I believe that the report has been thorough. Regrettably, it may not have been examined enough on the Floor of the House. I will not seek to divide the House on the motion.

7.4 pm

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): My apologies, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but my Public Accounts Committee kept me until just a few minutes ago.

I shall make only a brief argument. I do not believe that the boundary commissioners' recommendations take sufficient account of the way in which boundaries have changed and the way in which the relationship of the Member of Parliament with the local authority has changed. That has been a fundamental difference compared with what happened previously.

I remember my predecessor, more than 30 years ago, the late Lord Rhodes of Saddleworth—a great man, whom I deeply admired and respected and who was very generous to me and to the region. He had strong local roots, which I can illustrate by the fact that, as a Yorkshireman, he became lord-lieutenant of Lancashire. Not only was that unique but I never heard a whisper of complaint about it in all the years that he occupied that prestigious post. I mentioned that because his position was that he had nothing to do with the local authority. He used to claim that that was something separate, and he let the local authority get on with it.

Today, the position is completely different. One does have a great involvement. In view of the large amount of funds now made available from central Government to local government, it is inevitable that local government will make approaches to the Member of Parliament to enable it to be represented at the highest levels, where those decisions are made.

If one is to have that relationship between the local authority and the Member of Parliament, it makes it very difficult when a Member of Parliament becomes the Member for more than one local authority. That is the position in Ashton-under-Lyne now, because it will include part of Oldham and part of Tameside. The problem is that the distinct relationship that one should have now does not exist.

I do not believe that the boundary commission ever took that factor into account. It did not realise the changes that had taken place. People need to be made aware of the changes that have occurred.

I shall lose an important town in my constituency, the town that occupied most of my time even though it had only a small proportion of the population. People do that sort of thing, and so one becomes the possessor of the accumulated wisdom and understanding of a district. That will now go to waste. That is one of the inevitable consequences of boundary redistribution.

However, as I have said, the changes fail to take into account the relationship, which is absolutely necessary nowadays, between the Member of Parliament and the local authority. The boundary commission disappointed me by not taking that properly into account in its recommendations.

7.7 pm

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I listened to the Home Secretary earlier and I have listened to some of the speeches, and I would not add my praise to the boundary commissioners. They started with Hampshire as their first project. They misled the whole of Southampton by saying that they were going to retain the status quo. After the first review in Winchester, it turned out that they were going to accept completely the Labour-controlled Southampton city council's counter-proposals, and that its plans were going to be approved.

Naturally, there was consternation in my constituency because the idea was that I should have my best ward, the gateway to the city, taken and moved to Romsey. That is the type of nonsense thinking that takes place in the boundary commission office—taking the entrance of a city and putting it into another place, almost a small town, and at the same time ensuring that the Woolston ward, which the boundary commissioners had moved to Eastleigh more than 10 years ago, was brought back into the city.

It all went wrong as long ago as the early 1980s, when, during a local government reorganisation, it was foolishly agreed to allow 15 wards for a small city. That obviously meant that the wards could not be separated evenly, with seven and a half wards on each side. A whole constituency can be mucked up, but wards cannot be split. That has been an on-going problem for the past 10 years and I am sure that it will continue to create difficulties. The ward that is separated from the city constituency always wants to return, and the same will apply to Bassett in this case. Perhaps the Home Office Minister will explain why wards are removed when only a marginal number of votes are involved.

If a ward in the city had been split, the constituencies of Southampton, Itchen and Southampton, Test would have each received 4,500 extra votes. As was mentioned earlier, it is perfectly possible to work a bigger constituency. When Horace King, the then Member for Southampton, Itchen, was elected as Speaker in this place, he asked me to deal with some of his house calls because he did not have time. In those days, it was possible for Members of Parliament to help each other.

The problems in this ward will go on and on, but perhaps that is what the boundary commissioners want. The status quo decision caused everyone to relax, confident that the commission would not do anything. Suddenly, like a bolt of lightening, the commissioners decided to move Bassett into Romsey. We called several public meetings at the time and more than 1,500 people wrote to the boundary commissioners. The commission began to realise that it had made a bit of a boob and that it had not given sufficient warning of its intention to accept the Labour-controlled Southampton city council's plan. So it conducted a second review.

The second review faced exactly the same problem as the first: which ward should be moved out of the city constituency? We were told categorically that a ward could not be halved. We did not want to lose Bassett, so we offered Coxford in its place. The Queen's counsel in charge of the second review said that Coxford was socially and economically unsuited to Romsey. That is a load of nonsense because Bassett—which was supposed to be suited to Romsey—comprises one third council houses. The majority of those who live in Bassett work in

Southampton, not Romsey. There is not even a bus route from Bassett to Romsey. The only bus route from Southampton to Romsey is situated on the western side of the city and travels through the Coxford ward.

There are 11,437 voters in the ward that I am losing and the one that I am receiving—St. Luke's—has 9,672 voters. So I shall be about 1,500 voters down. The point is that the city has been disturbed completely. The Home Secretary must take on board the fact that if one ward in a city is preventing it from becoming two or three constituencies, there is no reason why the ward should not be divided.

The commission began its review in the face of a bad local government reorganisation and moved on to an even worse boundary commission inquiry which has resulted in a real dog's breakfast. Unfortunately, we will not be able to vote tonight to demonstrate our disapproval to the commissioners. They have received quite a bit of praise from hon. Members who have had no dealings with them or those who are quite happy with the results of the boundary changes. However, those of us who are unhappy with the situation think that it is a dog's breakfast.

I hope that we have learned something from the exercise. I advise people to watch out when they are offered the status quo; it is a trick and a tiger trap. Bureaucratic quangos think it up to bring us low. Hon. Members relax; they sit back and they say to their followers, "That's it; that's jolly good." But from then on it is murder; it is purgatory. One must take so much action in a very short time.

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I apologise to the House for entering the Chamber in the middle of my hon. Friend's speech. The ward to which he referred is to come into Romsey, which is part of the constituency that I represent at present. I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend has said. Largely as a result of pressure from the Conservative association in my constituency, we managed to force a second public inquiry. We advanced the argument that Coxford rather than Bassett should become part of the new Romsey constituency. The social geography worked in Coxford's case, but I do not believe that it will work in the case of Bassett.

Mr. Hill: I thank my hon. Friend. It is nice to have that expression of support—especially from a neighbouring constituency—as constituencies do not always agree. At the beginning of the commission's inquiry, several different voices offered different solutions and that allowed the boundary commissioners to stand back and say, "They cannot agree, so let's see if we can put forward a scheme." But the boundary commissioners had not done their homework and they did not advance their own scheme. They opted for the status quo and they allowed everyone else to sort out their problems for them.

There would be no problems with the Southampton seats now or in the future if we were allowed to split a ward. Why is a ward so sacrosanct that it cannot be divided? That is foolish thinking. The Home Secretary—whether it be the present incumbent or a future Home Secretary—must reconsider the matter. We cannot continue to mislead constituents by telling them that all is well and suddenly jumping on them with another plan from another political association.

In this case, it was not a neutral plan: it has caused great hardship in the two Southampton seats. We will try to overcome the difficulties. My party workers are a redoubtable crowd and they will take up the challenge. However, at the moment the future looks very black indeed. We have a unitary authority in local government and we face many other problems. We will have to hold many committee meetings simply to discuss the changes announced today.

I think that we could have dispensed with the boundary changes this time; there is no reason why boundaries must be reviewed every 10 years. There is no reason why seats should have a similar number of constituents when we know already that many constituencies contain many more or many fewer people than others. I chaired the committee that divided Milton Keynes into two constituencies without any fuss. We did that in this place. Why can we not do it again from time to time? Obviously, we must examine certain anomalies, but why do we always have to go outside for advice and judgment? I do not think that that is always necessary.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the hour is not late, but I know that we are hoping for an early Adjournment. I wish to air my protest; I am not happy that we will not have the opportunity to vote on the motion tonight, and I certainly do not believe that we should simply nod it through. The debate must be forceful enough to make the boundary commissioners realise that, even though they may be independent, they must consider the people whom their decisions affect. It is not a matter of parcelling people up into separate packages. I am sorry if I have gone on too long—I am sure that I have not. Nevertheless, I am glad that my protests were heard.

7.19 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): The first and last Member of Parliament for Basildon is what I will become if the order is approved tonight. Inasmuch as it affects me, I am totally opposed to it. The boundary commission has raped the town of Basildon to create an extra seat in Essex. Instead of working down from the north to the south, as it should have, it worked from the south up to the north.

There is a place called Basildon. I thought that the world knew that. However, apparently the boundary commission has never heard of it. It is extraordinary and, frankly, I think that it is a disgrace, that a town that everyone knows, a town of 68,000 people—the right number—has been destroyed. We will lose two wards, Pitsea East and Pitsea West, with over 20,000 people. Over 30,000 people from Corringham and Fobbing, Stanford-le-Hope, The Homesteads and Orsett will come in from Thurrock to make a new constituency of about 77,000 by the time that we have a general election. To add insult to injury, the name has not even been changed.

Already, I sense when I get to my feet some Opposition Members wave goodbye to me as my name is called. I recall that happening between 1983 and 1987, and between 1987 and 1992; it is happening again already. I hope that the people who report on these matters will read the debate. However, there is no earthly sense at the next general election in the television companies bringing out their swingometers or having the analysts sit round poring over Basildon.

[Mr. David Amess]

I will be the first and last Member of Parliament for Basildon. I am glad that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary is present, because he knows how strongly I feel that, at the very least, the constituency name should be changed. Those 30,000 people are not registered under the name of Basildon. The sensible change of name would have been to something like Basildon and Thameside or Basildon and Thamesway.

I telephoned the boundary commission this afternoon for the last time to find out precisely how it derived the name. I found the explanation less than convincing. At one point, I was told that the boundaries were all-important and that the name does not matter. Can one believe that? The name does not matter. Tell that to my constituents.

In the first Parliament in which I served, there were six Members of Parliament who had represented Basildon: Lord Braine; my hon. Friend the Member for Holland with Boston (Sir R. Body); Sir Robert McCrindle; Sir Edward Gardner; Mr. Harvey Proctor and me. I do not forget Eric Moonman, but he was no longer a Member of Parliament. I am the only person to have represented the town of Basildon on its own. It had always been part of a much larger area. It has been a struggle trying to build up a community spirit and to get people to work together, but we achieved it.

The whole problem started when the constituency was formed in 1983. There were three inquiries—a fact that says it all. At first, there was to be a Basildon, East and a Basildon, West and if that had happened, none of the problems that I and my constituents face today would have occurred.

This is probably a false rumour, but I have read the tomes courtesy of the Library. If one reads the representations, by the end of it all, one suspects that there may have been a conspiracy of the three political parties. I find it extraordinary that, of the nine wards that make up the town of Basildon—Pitsea East, Pitsea West, Fryerns Central, Fryerns East, Vange, Lee Chapel North, Langdon Hills, Nethermayne and Laindon—the one ward, Laindon, which then had Conservative councillors—all the rest were Labour—was not included in the seat of Basildon. It was put into Billericay.

I think that history will show that the three parties perhaps did somehow work together on the third and final set of proposals so that everything they judged to be socialist went into the constituencies of Thurrock and Basildon and everything that was judged to be Conservative went into the constituency of Billericay.

When I went for my final selection meeting for Basildon, I turned on the television to hear that the person who was likely to be chosen to fight the Conservative cause in Basildon was our then No. 1 tennis player, Buster Mottram. I was surprised when I was elected. There were no Conservative district or county councillors. In 1983, we were the 114th socialist seat that could be won by the Conservative party. Of course, the media were not interested in the Basildon seat then.

It has been brought to my attention that I mention my constituency whenever I rise to my feet. My hon. Friends know that if I had represented Bognor Regis, Brighton or anywhere in the country, I would still have mentioned my constituency. I did not create Basildon. It was the media in 1992 who created Basildon.

I will explain what went on. The then Labour council and the then, supposedly impartial, council chief executive told the media that the Basildon count in April 1992 would be the first to be declared. The council employed Barclays bank tellers so that the Basildon result would be declared in an hour. The script was that I would be the first Conservative to lose my seat. For the three weeks of the campaign, I was hounded by all parts of the media but the script went wrong.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. It might be an idea to get back to this script.

Mr. Amess: Thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I find it extraordinary that the boundary commission has decided to change the old constituency of Basildon when one considers that the eight wards that I have represented have built up a wonderful community spirit. Opposition spokesmen were always delighted to visit Basildon, together with the media. It is extraordinary that, in spite of all that, the boundary commission has decided to change it and bring in an extra 30,000 people making the constituency the largest in Essex.

The final chapter in the remarkable story of Basildon closes and it has been a privilege and a unique experience to have been the first and the last Member of Parliament for Basildon.

7.28 pm

Mr. Michael Colvin (Romsey and Waterside): I shall detain the House for only a short time. It is important, in such a debate, to put down markers for the next time that the boundary commission sits and considers our constituency boundaries.

I think that some of us who have seen considerable increases in the populations of our constituencies over the past few years are aware of the ease with which we can handle 90,000 or 100,000 electors. The time has come for the boundary commission, between now and when it next reports, in 10 years, to consider a radical reduction in the number of seats in the House. I would consider one of at least a third. We could cut the number of Members of Parliament to about 400, which would enable us all to have somewhere to sit and work in this place and would mean that we would not have to build new offices over the way. We could all pay ourselves a reasonable salary which would do away with the need to earn money elsewhere, a practice that is coming in for criticism at the moment. Now is the time to decide. However, such a decision begs the question, who decides who goes?

I propose for consideration the notion that all those hon. Members who are invited to resign their seats in order to achieve the reduction of a third in our number should be offered a life peerage at their current rate of pay. They could continue with their parliamentary activities in the upper House. I suspect that the authorities would be overwhelmed by the number of volunteers. It is a practical solution that the House should consider before we next come to debate the topic in 10 years' time.

7.30 pm

Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd): I support the recommendations that we are considering but begin by echoing the thanks that have been expressed by the Home Secretary and my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) to Sir John Knox and his staff for the work that they have done. The boundary commission's review was never going to be easy, and it is clear from the contributions that we have heard today that many hon. Members are unhappy with some of the recommendations.

In any event, the Boundary Commission Act 1992 had presented the commission with a shortened time scale for its investigations and deliberations. The commission nevertheless succeeded in producing what I believe is a largely coherent set of proposals, which adhere to the standards on consultation and impartiality that must characterise its work. The proposals are generally consistent and, although they acknowledge and respect the importance of community ties, they make a real effort to stick closer to the principle of equalising electorates than have previous commissions.

The order will mean that the number of seats in England will increase from 524 to 529 and that the size of the House of Commons will increase from 651 Members to 659. The wide discrepancies in levels of representation between neighbouring London boroughs was one of the most unsatisfactory outcomes of the third review. Pairing has done much to alleviate the problem, and the particular pairing schemes adopted managed to reflect genuine communities of interest.

Pairing is not unusual in the metropolitan boroughs, which effectively have the same functions as London boroughs. Indeed, in Tyne and Wear, the commission proposed constituencies which virtually ignore the integrity of boroughs. For example, Gateshead has one whole constituency and parts of three others which it shares with, respectively, Newcastle, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

London, apparently, is still over-represented by three seats but in 1991 the register was particularly poor in London, as a number of hon. Members have pointed out. It is estimated that under-registration in some inner London boroughs in 1991 was more than 10 per cent.

The key issue is the representational integrity of communities and avoidance of the needless and arbitrary divisions of towns, which can confuse the electorate. Very few towns are of a precise size to allow for one or more constituencies wholly contained within the urban area without the incorporation of dormitory villages. Furthermore, geographical location—for example, being on the coast—may limit the distributional options available, as they do in Worthing.

The commission did not have a policy in favour of the doughnut rather than the sandwich model. It did, however, resist proposals to divide towns such as Ipswich, Peterborough and York which are currently largely intact. In York, the commission tolerates an electorate of some 14 per cent. above the average but maintains the artificial division of others such as Bedford and Colchester, which could reasonably have been reunited. In general, the commission was prepared to be flexible and place natural community links above less tangible concerns such as the integrity of local authority areas.

I shall concentrate on the difficulties facing the boundary commission in the context of it having to give effect to the rules for the redistribution of seats which form schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986. I greatly welcome the Home Secretary's announcement that the Government intend to review the rules. As experts such as Iain McLean of Nuffield college have argued, the statutory rules contradict one another.

Rule 1, as I am sure that all right hon. and hon. Members will recall, states that there must not be substantially more or fewer than 613 seats in Great Britain and that, of those, Scotland must have at least 71 and Wales at least 35. The current reviews have given Scotland 72 and Wales 40, a total of 112 to represent a combined population of just under 7 million. The addition of the 18 seats proposed for Northern Ireland to represent 1.5 million people makes a total of 130 seats. Under the terms of rule 1 and according to the electoral quota, England would be left with just 483 seats, give or take a few, to represent more than 46 million people. Of course, it has not worked out like that in practice.

Before the commission's review, England was allocated 524 seats—due to increase to 529—meaning that the total number of seats in the United Kingdom Parliament will increase from 651 to 659. As my hon. Friend the Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), the hon. Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) and others have said, that constitutes almost 50 seats more than rule 1 stipulates in schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Constituencies Act.

Although rule 1 seems unambiguous, rule 4 discourages boundary commissions from crossing local government boundaries, and rule 5 requires the commissions to round the entitlements of some counties up rather than down when strictly the counties are entitled to just under half an extra seat. As Dr. McLean says, Parliament probably did not intend rule 5 to mean that, but it does. The commissions have awarded extra "rule 5" seats.

In addition, rule 6 enables the commissions to award extra seats to remote areas, and rule 7 creates a presumption against changing constituencies, which tends to preserve small ones. Rule 8 requires commissions to divide the electorate by the existing number of seats when calculating their target average electorate.

Taken together, rules 4 to 8 inevitably serve to increase the size of the House of Commons at each review. They therefore contradict rule 1. The contradiction means that almost anything is possible. It is a tribute to the expertise of the commission and to those such as Mr. David Gardner, who has already been mentioned, who helped to focus the commission's mind on these issues, that the commission came up with such sensible and coherent proposals. However, the basic contradiction in the rules, identified by experts like Dr. McLean, Professor Ronald Johnson of Essex and others, means essentially that anything that a boundary commission does can be justified by one of the rules—but so can almost any objection to it. As often happens in such situations when constitutional arrangements are at issue, the winners are usually lawyers and the losers are usually taxpayers and citizens.

Despite the best efforts in these islands, we have extremes of voter numbers per constituency which, to observers in democracies such as Australia and New Zealand, must appear haywire. For example, at one end of the scale, there are 20,000 voters in the Western Isles

[Dr. Kim Howells]

and, at the other, more than 100,000 in the Isle of Wight. I understand that, in Australia, the largest and smallest districts cannot be more than 10 per cent. either side of the average and the electoral commission redistricts each state every seven years at the outside, whereas in this country it has been every 12 years.

In its latest recommendations, the boundary commission for Wales said that it was finding it increasingly difficult to operate effectively given the ambiguities and contradictions of the existing rules for the redistribution of seats, which form schedule 2 to the 1986 Act. Similar complaints have come from the boundary commission for England.

I commend acceptance of the recommendations. I urge the Government to act quickly to ensure that the commission's already difficult task is not made more difficult by a refusal to address head-on the contradictions in the rules and to bring to this vital component of our democratic system some clarity and consistency.

7.39 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Nicholas Baker): I welcome the support by the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Dr. Howells) for the report. Debates on the reports of periodic reviews of constituency boundaries have always been lively occasions and it comes as no surprise to me that the debate has easily lived up to that reputation.

It is right that hon. Members should have the opportunity to explore the implications of those recommendations as they affect individual constituencies and the representational map of England. The issues and concerns raised today from all parts of the House provide, as if it were needed, the best example of the argument for the existence of the independent commission that I could hope to develop.

The boundary commissions, by comparison, are required to be, and to be seen to be, independent of Government and political parties. Their task is not easy, but it is necessary. The House recognised that in the debates on the work of the commissions in 1983 and again during the passage of the Boundary Commission Act 1992.

It would have been extraordinary had we seen today no expressions of dissatisfaction with the results of the review now completed. I have no doubt that some of the issues raised could have been resolved differently had the commission operated to a different set of rules from those that Parliament has seen fit to approve. The rules review that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary outlined in his opening speech will provide an opportunity to look at a number of issues that have been raised and we shall certainly take that forward when the boundary commission report for Northern Ireland has been cleared later this summer.

As the hon. Member for Pontypridd said, the commission was required to carry out the review within the rules that are set out in the 1986 Act, as amended. We should be prepared to recognise that the work that the commission has carried out has been both painstaking and meticulous. The report reflects the high degree of objectivity which the commission has brought to its task.

In a moment I shall answer specific points that have been raised. I can assure the House that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has concluded that, despite recommendations made to him, the report has been so persuasive that he was convinced that a change to it would not be justified. He did not, therefore, consider it right to propose any modification of the commission's recommendations. I believe that to be the honourable and correct course to follow.

I shall mention briefly some of the points raised in the debate. I make a general proviso that, quite understandably, many of them were addressed to the commission rather than to me and, if I am not able to cover them, the answers are set out in the mammoth report by the boundary commission.

The first point was the ratchet effect of the rules, to which many hon. Members referred. There are two particular aspects which tend to increase the number of seats in Parliament with successive reviews. The hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), along with the hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Harvey) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall), were among those who mentioned that. Rule 8 requires the commission to calculate the electoral quotas for each part of the country by dividing the electorate by the number of constituencies existing on the enumeration date. For example, in 1983 the English commission agreed to recommend three additional seats on the basis of special geographical considerations under rule 6. Those seats, rather than being regarded as a temporary requirement, became incorporated into the formula for calculating the electoral quota, thus the base figure increased and continues to increase. Rule 5 also incorporates a self-inflating element.

I certainly consider those issues appropriate for inclusion in any review of the rules. The hon. Member for Blackburn and my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Test (Mr. Hill) said that the review of rules should take into account the fact that the disparate size of wards creates problems when using them as building blocks for parliamentary constituencies.

Wards are used as building blocks as a matter of common sense and practice rather than as any requirement under the rules. Nevertheless, they are sensible building blocks; they are certainly understood by local and other groups, including party political associations. The point about the size of wards is relevant. In the metropolitan districts there is a statutory requirement that a ward can be divided by three to allow election by thirds. A review would certainly want to take that into account.

I should like to pay brief tribute to work of the Home Affairs Select Committee, which made four main recommendations: first, that there should be a fixed divisor providing a maximum number of seats in the home counties; secondly, that there should be an increase from one to two months in time allowed for submission of representations; thirdly, that the enumeration date should be changed to the date of the most recent publication of the electoral register; and fourthly, that there should be a technical change in the timetable for the next periodic review for Northern Ireland.

We accepted all those recommendations apart from the one about the divisor. We rejected that at the time because it would not provide a predictable number of seats from review to review, but that and other matters are still

outstanding. We have not had the opportunity to legislate on the three that we have accepted. They are certainly matters that a future review would examine.

Many hon. Members made a similar point about the naming of constituencies. I am aware that many are dissatisfied with the names.

Finally, and most predictably and happily, the debate would not have been complete without a contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess). The commission has set out clearly in paragraph 2.55 of chapter 2 of the report the principles that were applied to the names of constituencies. All the names that are now proposed have been published, and where there were any representations, they were fully discussed at local inquiries. That procedure seems a good and effective way of ensuring that public opinion can properly be taken into account, but a review could consider that.

There was some debate about the importance of electoral registration. I understand that, but there was insufficient recognition by the hon. Members for Blackburn, for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) and for Derbyshire, North-East (Mr. Barnes) of the facts.

The 1995 electoral register for England and Wales has the highest ever number of electors registered to vote—38.765 million. Electoral registration officers achieve high standards and we believe that the majority of eligible people are included in the register. We carry out an annual advertising campaign to encourage people to return the registration forms.

Mr. Tony Banks: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baker: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman, but I am under great obligation to move quickly and sit down soon.

The hon. Member for Blackburn made play of the amount spent on advertising; about £680,000 was spent in 1994-95 on television and related publicity targeted at groups most likely to be missing from the register. Those are the groups about whom he was worried. A total of £725,000 will be spent on a new television advertising campaign and related publicity in 1995-96, similarly targeted.

The hon. Gentleman also criticised the amount spent on arrangements for advertising targeted at those entitled to the new overseas franchise. It seems to me that his argument about people who may be missing from the register here is strong support for the need to advertise to people on the overseas register or who may be entitled to be on that register. In 1990, £750,000 was spent on those and no further advertising has taken place since then. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that as an answer.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the benefits of a system of rolling registration. The rules set out in the Parliamentary Constituencies Act 1986 concern the way in which reviews of parliamentary constituency boundaries are carried out. It would be stretching such a review beyond reasonable boundaries—if the House will pardon the word—to include consideration of registration procedure, as proposed. That is more a matter for the House.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Mitcham and Morden (Dame A. Rumbold) said that the rules review should be conducted with the full involvement of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The rules apply to all four countries, and I fully accept that it is important to consult them thoroughly. She, and others, express the view that regard should be paid to the level of representation in Greater London. The 1986 Act, in particular rule 4, requires the commission to review London boroughs but makes no mention of Greater London. But the commission examined London's boroughs individually, and exercised the discretion given to it under rule 5 to propose some seats that cross borough boundaries, where that was desirable. The number of seats in all the London boroughs is 74—10 fewer than the current number.

The commission's reasons for and policy behind this are well set out in the report. It has moved at least some way in the direction that some of my right hon. and hon. Friends would like it to go.

Many hon. Members made a good deal of the higher representation in Scotland and Wales. Those countries have long enjoyed a higher degree of representation than England. That is reflected in the rules in the two ways to which many hon. Members drew attention. We have already said that we will consider the possibility of changing the rules once the fourth general review has been concluded.

As to the size of the House, a subject that entered the debate latterly, a number of comments have been made about it and about the process of growth, which is clearly a matter of some concern to hon. Members here in the Chamber tonight. I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend has taken careful note of that and will bear the comments in mind when he comes to consider the terms of the review.

Mr. Soley *rose—*

Mr. Baker: I apologise, but I am under pressure to conclude, and I want to try to answer all the points that have been made.

Several hon. Members, especially the hon. Member for North Devon, referred to the Isle of Wight and to whether it should be a special case. The commission went into great detail about whether it should be split into two seats and, as the electorates of both would have been low, decided that it should not. The hon. Gentleman and others perhaps underestimated the depth of the study that the commission carried out.

The hon. Member for North Devon also said that the commission's proposals for Wiltshire and Swindon were contradictory. It is certainly true that a large number of representations about Swindon were received. The constituency which the commissioners have recommended for the Swindon, North seat has been left with some capacity for future growth, but in the commission's view it was certainly an acceptable size.

I must apologise to all whose points I have been unable to answer in this debate. I assure them that the report contains detailed background information explaining why the commission took the decisions that it took. I hope that hon. Members will look at the report to find the answers.

This debate has been wide ranging and challenging. In those respects it reflects the task that the commission has just now completed.

Mr. John Carlisle *rose—*

Mr. Baker: I apologise to my hon. Friend—

Mr. John Carlisle: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can the debate go on until 10 pm? There seems to be some confusion about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is no confusion in the Chair's mind. It can go on until 10 o'clock—but it is clear that the Minister is not giving way.

Mr. Baker: I apologise to my hon. Friends—

Mr. Soley: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that the Minister is not giving way, but he has said that he is under pressure of time. I am not sure why; I thought that the debate could continue.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I am not aware of any such pressure. It is, however, up to the Minister whether to give way.

Mr. Baker: I give way to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley).

Mr. Soley: I want to know whether the Government are really thinking about the size of the House, and whether they are prepared to enter into talks about it with other parties. We need an all-party approach to achieve what hon. Members on both sides seem to be contemplating.

Mr. Baker: I accept that an all-party approach would be necessary. My right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, who is listening carefully, has heard the hon. Gentleman's suggestion.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will the Minister quickly comment on my suggestion that the membership of the commission should be broadened to include former Members of the House who may be more sensitive to the feelings expressed briefly in this debate? Hon. Members might have enlarged on them had the pressure of time not been so great. Would that be a good idea?

Mr. Baker: I apologise for not having answered my hon. Friend's interesting point before. I see some difficulties with it, however. I accept that former Members of this House have an unparalleled knowledge of the system and would thus be useful. I must point out, though, that the commission has to be completely independent, and be seen to be so.

The main point is that many former Members of Parliament, under the formula advanced by hon. Friend, will be peers in the other House. That struck me as a positive contribution to the debate. My hon. Friend's point is a serious one which my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary has now heard. The review might consider all these and many other points.

Mr. Luff: I will not push my hon. Friend to answer my points about the Inkberrow ward, but can he promise me a letter on the issues that I raised in the debate?

Mr. Baker: I am devastated not to have been able to reply properly. That ward is clearly an important issue and I shall certainly write to my hon. Friend about it.

The English commission and the report's recommendations have been subject to the closest scrutiny by the House. The common theme that I draw from this full debate is the vital importance of preserving the integrity and impartiality of the commission. The best way to do that is by not tampering with its recommendations when it has conscientiously carried out its duties within the guidelines prescribed by law.

There is plenty for us to consider in a future review and we have started to lay the agenda for it tonight. I invite the House to approve the draft order giving effect to the English commission's final recommendations, without modification.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 6th June, be approved.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): With permission, I shall put together the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 101(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.),

FINANCIAL SERVICES

That the draft Financial Services Act 1986 (Investment Advertisements) (Exemptions) (No. 2) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 10th May, be approved.

That the draft Public Offers of Securities Regulations 1995, which were laid before this House on 10th May, be approved.

DEFENCE

That the draft Army, Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 22nd May, be approved.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

Question agreed to.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

COMMON FISHERIES POLICY

That this House takes note of the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on 6th June 1995, relating to the setting of maximum levels of fishing effort for certain Western waters fisheries; welcomes the contribution this will make towards fisheries conservation, while permitting existing levels of fishing activity to continue, including by United Kingdom fishermen; and supports the Government's intention to secure appropriate enforcement arrangements in further negotiations.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

Question agreed to.

Locum Doctors

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

7.57 pm

Ms Estelle Morris (Birmingham, Yardley): I am grateful to have the opportunity on an Adjournment debate to talk about the accountability of deputising and locum doctors. Like many matters that are brought before the House by Back-Bench Members, the issue that I wish to raise stems directly from the case of a constituent and her family.

I shall explain what happened, and in so doing provide the rationale for the changes in law that I am requesting. My constituent, Mrs. Hilda Winstanley, died in March after a period of illness with stomach cancer. The family, which was very close to her, chose to care for her at home. Members of the family looked after her carefully, together with their general practitioner and some excellent support from district nurses, throughout the final months of her illness. She lived with her husband, son, daughter-in-law and grandson. It is a close family, the members of which have given each other support. Mrs. Winstanley was 57 years of age and the family had hoped for many more years together. It was a tragic 12 months for them.

On a Friday, the family's GP visited Mrs. Winstanley to monitor progress and to give care, support and medicine. On the Sunday, her condition rapidly deteriorated. Mr. Winstanley called the GP, to find that he had put his calls through to one of the two Birmingham deputising services. A locum doctor attended. What happened in the next six or eight hours left much to be desired. I am not a medical practitioner and I do not seek to lay blame on anyone, but anyone who has read details of the case can surmise only that the quality and standard of care given to Mrs. Winstanley on the final day of her life were not those that she should have been able to have.

Mrs. Winstanley was so ill that she could no longer take a pain-killing drug by mouth. She required diamorphine through a syringe drive, which should have been properly administered to her. For some reason, six hours passed before she was given that drug, which would have alleviated some of her pain. There are many elements of health care that are in question at that point. There is no doubt, however, that Mrs. Winstanley died in agony when she should have died in peace.

Mr. Winstanley graphically described the situation to me, when he told me last weekend that his wife had spent six months pleading with him to help her to live. She spent the last six hours of her life pleading with him to help her to die. That should not have happened. The technology and medicine existed to enable Mrs. Winstanley to die in peace. Mr. Winstanley, who had cared for her lovingly throughout their married life and especially throughout the final six months of her serious illness, feels that he let her down. When she needed help—when she needed a pain-killer—all his attempts failed to get the drug or to get the locum doctor to find it, to administer it to his wife. That is appalling. I think that we would all feel bad about that. We would all wish to God that that need not have been a description of Mrs. Winstanley's last six hours of life.

I make no judgment about who was responsible. It is not my place to do so. Mr. Winstanley felt that the locum doctor was at fault. He had called the general practitioner and he felt that the GP who attended should have been able to get drugs to his wife within six hours.

There are many questions to be answered. Why was the locum doctor not carrying the drug? Why did he not know where to get the drug? Why, eventually, did he write a prescription that was wrong and could not be carried out?

Mr. Winstanley decided to bring a complaint against the GP and referred it in the proper manner to the Birmingham family health services authority. It was only then that he learnt that because the locum was not a principal doctor, he could not bring the complaint against him. Instead, he had to bring it against his GP. That GP was the same GP who had cared for his wife with him for the six months of her illness. He had no complaints against his GP. His GP could not answer the questions that he wished to raise.

I attended the informal hearing of the FHSA with Mr. Winstanley and representatives from the community health council. The family GP was requested to attend, as is normal within Birmingham. As is also normal within Birmingham, he attended. The FHSA had no powers to call the locum doctor to attend the hearing. The result was farcical. In attendance was the FHSA informal panel, myself in support of Mr. Winstanley, the CHC in support of him, Mr. Winstanley and the family GP. The one person who could have answered the questions, the locum doctor, chose not to attend.

I was told clearly during the hearing by the medical member of the FHSA panel that the authority had no powers to make the locum doctor attend. It had requested that he should do so, but for whatever reason, he had chosen not to.

The FHSA's informal hearing could have been a healing process. If Mr. Winstanley had had the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers, he could have begun to understand what went wrong in the care of his wife on that fateful Sunday. He could have then begun the period of coming to terms with his bereavement a little more quickly. We all left the meeting continuing to be dissatisfied with the level of treatment that Mrs. Winstanley had received, not having had the opportunity to ask the questions that needed answering.

We established that if Mr. Winstanley wanted to bring a complaint against the locum, he would have to go to the General Medical Council. With the support of the CHC, he referred his complaint to the GMC. He received a letter two weeks ago from the GMC to the effect that if the council were to consider his complaint, he would have to provide a sworn affidavit. That offended him. I might understand why it asked for a sworn affidavit, but in Mr. Winstanley's mind, the council was almost saying that he might be pretending that certain things had not happened. In coming to terms with the loss of his wife, he feels that he has been insulted.

I know that it is necessary to pay to obtain an affidavit. The procedure may require Mr. Winstanley—he may wish to deal with the matter in this way—to go to a solicitor to get assistance in preparing an affidavit. The process represents another barrier in adequately voicing his complaint. The FHSA would have been a far better forum in which to raise his concerns. It is local. It is in Birmingham, and it took him only 15 minutes to travel to

[Ms Estelle Morris]

the hearing. The procedure was informal—not everything was written down and recorded. There was an atmosphere conducive to sharing problems and responding to concerns. That was the environment in which Mr. Winstanley wanted his problems raised. The GMC alternative was not acceptable in Mr. Winstanley's case.

As I understand the law, a GP retains responsibility for his patient even if a locum or deputising doctor deals with him or her, unless that doctor is a principal doctor on the list of an FHSA. In Birmingham, there are two commercial deputising services, both of which employ principal doctors and other doctors. When a GP puts through his calls to a locum or deputising service, he does not know whether the GP who is sent to his patients is a principal or non-principal doctor. The calls are allocated on a cab-rank principle. During any one evening or off-duty period for a GP, some of his cases will be sent to a principal doctor and some may be sent to a non-principal doctor.

The results are unsatisfactory for all concerned. Some patients and some families of patients will not be able to bring a complaint against a doctor merely because he or she is a non-principal doctor acting as a locum or deputising doctor. That is something that is out of the control of the patient or his or her family.

It was not Mr. Winstanley's choice to call in a locum doctor who was not a principal. That was the way in which the system worked. That is what the family GP had chosen to do on the day in question. It is unsatisfactory for the patient that there is a two-tier approach to making complaints.

I have been motivated to initiate the debate because of my concerns for the individual patient and for my constituents generally. The more I consider the system, however, the more unfair I feel it is for GPs as well. I concede the principle that a GP should retain responsibility for his patients. I want that principle to be retained, as all of us do who are the patients of a GP. It is best that GPs attend their patients. They have an overall knowledge of patients' treatment and background. They know how they may react to certain circumstances. I do not, however, want my GP on call 24 hours a day. That will not make him a good GP when he is on call or attending his surgery the next day.

The GP's practice was a two-handed practice. I think that it is reasonable that at certain times of the week, for example, on that Sunday, a practice should call on the support of a deputising service. That is reasonable. I do not think that it is reasonable, however, that the GP should retain responsibility for every action of the deputising GP or locum during that period.

Let us think what might have gone wrong in this case. Perhaps the locum was not carrying the correct drugs. Perhaps he had not briefed himself sufficiently on how to get diamorphine on a Sunday in my part of the city of Birmingham. Perhaps he did not make a proper examination of the patient when he arrived and did not make the necessary judgments about what treatment she needed. Perhaps he wrote an incorrect prescription. Whatever it might have been, I do not honestly see how one can hold the family's GP accountable for those actions. It was not a lack of knowledge of the patient or of the background of the family that could have caused that error.

Those are examples of what the locum might have done wrong on that occasion. I think that he should be held to account. That is a principle that all of us try to adhere to in our jobs. Being a GP is an important job. Many of us would consider it to be one of the most important, because one is delivering a service at a time when a person and his or her family are vulnerable. That family was vulnerable at that time. Those people needed the best possible service that medicine could provide, and they did not get it. I feel that that locum, a properly qualified GP, should be held accountable for his actions. It is unfair to hold the family GP accountable for those actions, and it is unfair to deprive my constituent of the opportunity to go to the local family health services authority to try to seek redress.

I ask the Minister to address three items when he replies. First, I should be grateful if he expressed an appreciation of the difficulty that Mr. Winstanley is now in, and an understanding of how Mr. Winstanley feels that the system has let him down, not only medically—I do not think that the Minister is in a position to make a judgment—but it has deprived him of an opportunity to bring his complaint at a local level, in a supportive, informal setting, which the FHSA could have provided. Instead, because of the system, he must approach a bureaucratic organisation—the General Medical Council.

Secondly, I would like the Minister to comment on, or acknowledge, the fact that the family GP was being treated unfairly, in that he was called to a hearing and was held to account for the actions of a deputising doctor—actions that he could not reasonably have been expected to prevent.

Thirdly, I would like the Minister to give some indication that he might agree, after the debate, to reflect on the points that I have made and the issues that I have raised. Perhaps at a later date, after his considered judgment, he will feel it appropriate to change the legislation so that there is an arrangement whereby a local FHSA can hold to account any GP who serves patients on its list, in the same way that it can hold to account a principal doctor who is on its list. That is right for GPs.

More importantly, we all hope that medical mistakes do not happen—it is absolutely crucial that they do not—but if they do happen, and if people feel that they have not received the care to which they are entitled, it should be easy for them to gain redress, to ask the questions, in a local, supportive environment. It was not my constituents' choice to have a locum on that Sunday. My constituents ended up with a locum because of the way in which our health service is structured. It should not have meant that that took away their rights to hold the doctor to account for his actions.

It was a tragedy that my constituent died so young, when there was so much before her, for her and her family. Let us hope that as a result of that tragic death, there is a proper consideration of the problems, and perhaps an indication that we might be able to prevent this from happening to a family in another part of my city, or another part of our country, in future.

8.14 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Gerald Malone): I am extremely grateful to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Ms Morris) for putting her case, in which she has been involved for some time, in a highly detailed way,

as a constituency Member of Parliament. I thank her for raising it in that way and for the way in which she made specific requests of me, to which I shall respond at once; I shall then go on to the more general matters that underlie the points that she raised.

I believe that there is a slightly more complete version of the procedures, which I shall set on the record and which I hope the hon. Lady will find helpful. I hope that her constituent will find it helpful as well.

I shall immediately respond to the hon. Lady's request that I express some appreciation for the position of her constituent, Mr. Winstanley, and I do so on two grounds: first, to express sympathy for the predicament in which Mr. Winstanley and his family found themselves following the tragic circumstances of the death of Mr. Winstanley's wife. That is clearly something that I understand in seeing a lot of what goes on in the health service. It is unusual, but it is a sad personal tragedy. I extend my sympathy to Mr. Winstanley.

I appreciate how someone in Mr. Winstanley's circumstances can find it daunting to have to go through formal procedures if they are to get their point across. That is why I hope that the hon. Lady will be satisfied if I explain where we are, and what changes are in hand about complaints, the Wilson report, which is now being considered, and say that we recognise that one of the most important things when somebody has been affected by the health service and is at a time of crisis is that we make the system as simple and as accessible as possible so that the circumstances can be fairly investigated and that person can get his or her points across.

The second point about which the hon. Lady asked me to say something concerned the family GP being unfairly treated. I cannot comment on that and I do not intend to do so. The intention of what I say will be revealed in my remarks about why it is important that ultimate responsibility must reside with a GP, and it is up him or her to decide how services, out of hours, principally, are provided by locums, deputising services or, indeed, co-operatives. I cannot respond as positively to the hon. Lady's second request.

On the hon. Lady's third point, of course I shall reflect on what she has said. What she has said about how her constituent has been affected by this tragic incident is extremely important when dealing with practical matters. I shall reflect on that, although I cannot give an undertaking to change legislation during this Adjournment debate, and she would not expect me to do so, but when I look at other matters in connection with complaints, I shall bear in mind all that she has said. After all, I am more interested in the practicalities of how all these procedures are brought forward rather than in their theory. They are designed to meet practical cases and practical needs.

Perhaps it would be helpful to the House if I set out a number of the principles and the detail involved in matters of this kind. Clearly, all patients must be confident that they are receiving services that are appropriate and to a proper standard. That is probably a matter beyond dispute. They must be assured of that, whether it is their own GP or a deputy who is treating them. It will not always be their GP. As the hon. Lady quite rightly pointed out, we cannot expect everybody to be on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. That is why there are very firm and detailed arrangements in place to allow out-of-hours cover to be provided by people other than the person's GP.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that those principles are already firmly in place. That is the case already and it will continue to be so. Indeed, we propose changes to the NHS complaints procedures to which I have alluded, which will, I believe, strengthen the relationship between GPs and patients.

I was struck by what the hon. Lady said about the relationship that exists between her constituent and his GP. It may be helpful if I describe in general terms how doctors providing general medical services—GPs, in layman's language—are accountable for their actions. That happens in three ways. First, they must provide the full range of services covered by their contract with the national health service. It is important to remember that GPs are independent contractors, and that the arrangements between family health services authorities and doctors for the provision of general medical services are clearly laid down in the National Health Service (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992. A GP's terms of service are contained in schedule 2 to those regulations. So GPs are tied down by regulation in terms of what they have to provide.

Secondly, a GP must provide services to the appropriate professional standards, which are not left undefined; guidance on standards of professional conduct and medical ethics are provided by the General Medical Council. Thirdly, doctors must not be negligent in providing services. A failure in that respect would allow somebody who had suffered from negligent treatment to have access to the courts.

That three-pronged approach to ensuring that the services are specified and that someone is responsible for the way in which they are delivered means that patients will have effective redress against any doctor who delivers inadequate general medical care, even if that doctor is not their GP. I believe that that principle serves patients' interests well.

The hon. Member for Yardley is right to say that I do not want to enter into the details of the particular case that she described. Indeed, she would not expect me to do so, partly because it may, and probably will, be subject to proceedings elsewhere. However, in general terms, when a patient is worried about the actions of a deputy or locum there are three ways in which he may take action.

If the deputising doctor, even though not the patient's own GP, is a GP working in practice, the patient can make a formal complaint to the FHSA about him or her. That is relatively new, and we changed the regulations fairly recently in response to suggestions that it would be a sensible practical arrangement.

Even if the deputy is not a GP, the patient can still make a complaint to the FHSA about the deputising arrangements provided by his or her own GP, who can then decide what action to take against the deputy. Ultimately, the GP must have the responsibility because GPs take the decisions about whether to allow someone to stand in on their behalf.

I should like to add one important fact to which the hon. Lady did not refer: GP practices are, of course, required to include in their practice leaflets the arrangements for providing medical services when the doctors are not personally available. In normal circumstances, if there is

[Mr. Gerald Malone]

a proper flow of information between GP and patient, it will be clearly understood what arrangements are in place. Whether there is an arrangement with a deputising service or with a co-operative of FHSA doctors in the area, or any other arrangement, it should be brought clearly to the patients' attention.

If the patient believes that the doctor has breached professional standards, that is a different matter. Whatever the status of the doctor—whether he is an FHSA practitioner, a locum or somebody working in a deputising service—the patient can make representations directly to the General Medical Council.

I heard what the hon. Lady said about the difficulties that her constituent had had in trying to do that. Indeed, it is a difficult thing for someone in tragic circumstances to do. However, I ask the hon. Lady to understand the other side of the coin. A complaint to the GMC about any medical practitioner is a serious matter, and everybody must be concerned to ensure that proper procedure is followed. It is not a bad idea to allow the GMC to deal right at the beginning with what may be frivolous or ill-intentioned complaints—although of course I do not make that suggestion in connection with the case that the hon. Lady has described. The GMC must ensure that everything is well founded before a case is taken further, and that is probably a sensible provision.

The GMC is the regulatory body for the medical profession and approaches questions concerning shortcomings in doctors' performance from the perspective of professional standards. That path is currently being strengthened by the Government through the introduction of the Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, which received its Third Reading in the House on Monday this week, and which will change the way in which the General Medical Council can consider a doctor's performance.

That is a parallel point but still an important one, because it illustrates how concerned the House and the Government are on a continuing basis with such issues. The new legislation is important because it will enable the GMC, for the first time, to examine doctors' performance and to require them to undergo retraining. That change does not exactly answer the hon. Lady's concern, but it is a step in the right direction.

In the third instance—if the doctor has been negligent—whatever else happens, the patient will continue to be able to seek redress directly through the courts. I believe that those arrangements properly reflect the way in which family doctor services are provided.

Family health services authorities make arrangements with self-employed medical practitioners for the provision of general medical services in their localities, and family doctors' terms of service with the NHS require them to ensure that all patients registered with them have access to general medical care 24 hours a day. To dilute that responsibility would be a serious step, whose consequences might not be entirely desirable.

Clearly, the hon. Member for Yardley is especially interested in deputising and the FHSA "list". Of course GPs do not have a responsibility to deliver care personally 24 hours a day. They may delegate responsibility for patient care to another doctor acting as a deputy. Often that will be a colleague in the same practice, or in a neighbouring practice—increasingly, doctors are working on a co-operative basis—or it may be someone employed through a commercial deputising service.

The individual practitioner must decide how best to provide for the needs of his or her patients. The best way can vary across the country. In some areas, a co-operative may be more suitable; in others, that is not practicable, so a deputising service is used. I know that the practice in the case under consideration was not large, but in a large practice it is sometimes possible to deal with the responsibility within the partnership itself.

However, a GP on the FHSA list will be held responsible for ensuring that the appropriate services are provided to the patient at all times. That ensures that any deputy used will be suitably qualified in the demands of general practice. The responsibility rests firmly with the doctor within the FHSA, who is primarily accountable for his or her patient's care.

Where a commercial deputising service is used, we have instituted extra safeguards, which I would like to take the opportunity to place on the record. Responsibility for monitoring the standards of such services rests with individual family health services authorities. Family health services authorities also ensure that the extent of their use by individual doctors is reasonable, and satisfy themselves that arrangements for their use have proper regard to the interests of patients and doctors alike. There cannot be a simple resigning of responsibility to a service over which there is no control, and clearly the FHSA takes a close interest in the standards of such services.

None the less, individual general practitioners provide patient care, and it is they who decide whether to employ a commercial deputising service. Doctors employing such services must accept personal responsibility if the doctor working for the deputising service is not on a family health services authority medical list. If that doctor is not on an FHSA list and the FHSA has no control of the quality, unless the GP took on the responsibility there would be a dangerous gap, which must not be allowed to open.

Ms Estelle Morris: I take everything that the Minister has said so far and I approve of the legislation that has just gone through Parliament in relation to extra powers to the General Medical Council. However, he has not yet dealt with one principle that the lay person finds difficult to understand: how does the Minister justify the fact that a professional, properly qualified person going about his job should not be held personally accountable for the way in which he does that job?

I understand the point about the contractual arrangements: a general practitioner would be at fault if he had not contracted properly for adequate cover while he was out of the city or unavailable and if he had used a practice that was not approved by the family health services authority. The Birmingham deputising service, however, is approved by the FHSA. The Minister has not yet dealt with the kernel of the issue: how come we have a system where professionals can pass off responsibilities for their professional action to another person? It is as simple as that for my constituents.

Mr. Malone: I am not quite certain that I have understood the hon. Lady. I thought that she started out by asking: how come, say, a deputy could manage to slip away from responsibility?

Ms Morris *indicated assent.*

Mr. Malone: I have understood the hon. Lady's point. As I have explained, the answer is that that person cannot slip away from that responsibility. Let us take not a precise case but a fictitious case of a deputising doctor who, it is clear, has committed an act of negligence. If he does come within the FHSA, the right of redress is available in a number of ways. The first is through the courts. If the matter involves not purely negligence but professional misconduct, it can be raised with the GMC.

The hon. Lady's complaint is that a lot of that is extremely complex. Perhaps in her eyes it is not an entirely satisfactory way of dealing with the matter; she has explained that her constituent is deeply troubled and does not wish to go through those routes. I remind her, however, that there are two other routes. There is the informal process, which I understand has been tried in this case, with few powers of compulsion. The reason for that is that it is designed properly to be a dispute resolution that remains as close as possible to the patient.

An informal process, however, requires the co-operation of all those involved. Let us say, for example, that a complaint had been made against an FHSA-registered general practitioner. There is no compulsion in ensuring that the FHSA is involved in the informal process. As a principle, that could cause difficulties. There is the more formal route to sort out a formal complaint. It is then the GP principal, who has passed on the responsibility, who has to involve the deputy or locum who has been accused of misconduct or malpractice, bringing him into the system.

In the current context, it is not possible to leave a gap where the ultimate responsibility must be in the hands of the GP principal who assigns the obligation temporarily to someone out of hours.

Ms Morris: I should like to raise two points and perhaps to fill in a bit of background. Having spoken to the FHSA, I understand that it is common practice and the done thing in Birmingham—although at an informal hearing this is optional—for doctors to attend the informal session. That is much to be praised. They turn up voluntarily; that is the cultural background against which this incident has happened and that needs to be understood. The comparison with the GP who was a locum and who refused to turn up was unheard of. There are not other cases where that has happened if a principal doctor is involved.

Secondly, I hope that the Minister appreciates that, as politicians, it is always right for us to set structures and formalities. There is a danger, however, that sometimes we believe that structures will answer problems. Sometimes it is the informal nature of a setting, the way in which one can talk and discuss and the healing process—I have used that phrase before—that do the good.

The informal hearing of the FHSA seemed a better atmosphere and environment in which to begin to sort out such a problem. I thought that it was a shame that someone should be forced to go to the more formal setting when an informal setting might have been satisfactory. It is a tragedy that patients are deprived of the informal setting and opportunity in cases involving a locum doctor who is not a principal practitioner.

Mr. Malone: I agree with the hon. Lady and I am delighted to hear that, in Birmingham, it is the general practice that informal proceedings work and that all participating parties attend and attempt to resolve matters in that way. That is clearly the best way, but one is always obliged, within an informal setting where there is a process, to understand that someone may not want to participate in that process. People may feel that they are at some risk and that some facts will be adduced at the informal hearing that could be used against them. One can understand that.

Often, one cannot compel everyone, by the logic of it, to attend an informal hearing. People may think that matters of substance are at risk in terms of their career if they happen to be a doctor. They may want everything to be done formally, where rules of evidence apply more strictly. I agree with the hon. Lady, however, that, where possible—this is the whole point about introducing informal procedures under formal structures where one gets proper rights of address if matters are in dispute—such things should be encouraged. I am delighted to hear that, in the main, they work well in Birmingham. All those who contribute to that are to be congratulated.

I concede that formal FHSA procedures can appear daunting, not just to patients but often to GPs. In response to that, the Government have published, as the hon. Lady is aware, proposals for a new complaints procedure for the NHS which will be implemented from April 1996. The current complexity of the formal complaints procedure will be replaced by a system that is simpler and fairer to patients, practitioners and staff. All in all, that represents an impressive array of safeguards that ensure that all doctors, including deputies, are accountable for the care that they deliver. That is one of the great strengths of general practice. We are continuing to build on that.

I say again to the hon. Lady that I am sorry that, in the case of her constituent, we did not already have in place the new procedures which could have been more effective in resolving the problems that he has faced. I again reiterate my personal sympathy for him and his family, in what has clearly been a difficult time. I am sure that the matters that the hon. Lady has raised will inform the debate about how the new procedure becomes embedded and that this difficulty will be taken into account. I give her an undertaking that I shall ensure that that happens.

I hope that, by other means, the hon. Lady's constituent is able to gain some degree of satisfaction or at least an understanding of what took place at that terrible moment in the family's life. I congratulate her on representing her constituent's case in such a constructive and purposeful way so that his particular dilemma may be resolved. There could also be some lasting benefit from drawing the matter to the attention of the Government as we move forward in that area.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-three minutes to Nine o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 15 June 1995

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MADAM SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ACCOMMODATION LEVEL CROSSINGS BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)

QUEEN MARY AND WESTFIELD COLLEGE BILL (*By Order*)
Orders for Third Reading read.
To be read the Third time on Thursday 22 June.

CITY OF WESTMINSTER BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)

LONDON LOCAL AUTHORITIES (No. 2) BILL *[Lords]* (*By Order*)
Orders for consideration read.
To be considered on Thursday 22 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

TREASURY

Small Business

1. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what progress has been made with measures to help small business announced in his 1993 and 1994 Budgets. [27001]

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Jonathan Aitken): My right hon. and learned Friend's Budget measures to help small firms are making good progress, particularly in regard to the enterprise investment scheme and venture capital trusts.

Mr. Jenkin: When Ministers consult small businesses with regard to the next Budget, will my right hon. Friend take on board the views of the vast majority of small businesses, which have no interest in a single European currency? Could that be because they experience the reality of doing business as small firms, and know that we export less than 8 per cent. of our gross domestic product in goods and services to the hard-core countries of the European Union which are likely to participate in a single currency? Will my right hon. Friend assure me that those firms will not be treated as right-wing xenophobes?

Mr. Aitken: Like my hon. Friend, I have noted the views of the Federation of Small Businesses, which makes a great contribution to our domestic economy and our performance as not just a European but a world trading nation.

I hope that the federation will take some comfort from what my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said about the single currency on 8 June, namely that "the circumstances may not ever be right".—[*Official Report*, 8 June 1995; Vol. 261, c. 316.]

Encouraging signals have also come from President Chirac's Government. All those signs suggest that the prospects of economic and monetary union are receding into more distant and uncertain horizons; but when any decision is made, it will be made on the basis of what is in Britain's best national interests and in accordance with our constitutional arrangements.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Chief Secretary aware that very few people will take any notice of his answers about anything? When he went to a board meeting of BMARC—a small business—he sat there not even knowing what was being done. He was paid £10,000 a year for not asking questions; two of his mates got done £2,000 for asking questions. What kind of a show does the right hon. Gentleman think he is running?

Mr. Aitken: I might as well retort that nowadays the hon. Gentleman does not seem to know what his own Front Benchers are doing. I am, however, glad to have a chance to repeat to the House that I stand by my statement on 30 March that I was given not the slightest indication or information, as a non-executive director, that any of the contracts that were going to Singapore would in any way be for onward shipment to Iran or anywhere else. I welcome the new inquiries that are taking place, and I am certain that at the end of the day they will clear my name completely.

Mr. Congdon: Does my right hon. Friend agree that small businesses will provide an increasing number of jobs over the next decade and beyond? Is it not vital, therefore, to ensure that we continue to have low interest rates and low inflation to provide the right economic framework to enable those businesses to prosper?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is right: small businesses are the life-blood of Britain's economy. There are some 3 million of them, and they create employment for some 50 per cent. of the work force. They depend, as much as any other part of the economy, on a stable economic framework in which there are sound public finances, low inflation and sustainable growth—all of which conditions have been put in place by my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Economic and Finance Council

2. **Mr. Soley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what decisions were reached at the last meeting of ECOFIN. [27033]

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): At its last meeting, on 22 May, the Council reached political agreement on a proposed investor compensation directive. We agreed that the conditions were now met for the disbursement of the 85 mecu loan to Ukraine which was first agreed in December 1994 and we reached agreement in principle to a further loan of up to 200 mecu, subject to conditionality. Lastly, the Council adopted a regulation to delay revaluation of the Belgian franc within the agrimonetary system.

Mr. Soley: Have there been any discussions at all in ECOFIN about the political framework that would be necessary to operate a single currency?

Mr. Clarke: ECOFIN has made quite a lot of progress talking about the technical issues that surround the

proposal to move to economic and monetary union. Obviously, there are considerable political implications in that and ECOFIN is composed of Ministers of Finance who discuss the politics of it, but these are early days. It is when the framework becomes clearer, the timetable becomes clearer and the number of states that comply with the convergence criteria becomes clearer that the political debate will no doubt deepen.

Mr. Wilkinson: As the mechanistic and regulatory impediments to a true, single, integrated market remain since the last meeting of ECOFIN, will my right hon. and learned Friend, when he goes to Brussels on Monday for its next meeting, say clearly to his counterparts on the Council that they really ought to get rid of the bottlenecks and impediments to free trade in the Community and pay less attention to harmonisation of exchange rates?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend that the completion of the single market with the removal of all regulatory and other impediments to free trade and fair competition between the member states is extremely important. As he knows, the British Government have taken the leading part in that, and it was really following the Single European Act and the actions we took after that that the British paved the way for the creation of the single market. We intend to complete it. Anything that improves the workings of the market and removes barriers to or distortions of trade is, in my opinion, welcome.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Given the Chief Secretary's stated opposition this afternoon to the principle of a single currency and given the Prime Minister's statement earlier this week on the principle of a single currency that he is persuadable—and persuadable against it by the very group the Chancellor of the Exchequer accused this morning of right-wing xenophobia—will the Chancellor now confirm his position on a single currency? Is he, as he always was, in favour of the principle of a single currency—yes or no?

Mr. Clarke: I think the hon. Gentleman should consult an ear, nose and throat specialist, because he did not seem able to hear clearly what I said last night about my inflation target and I do not think he was quite able to hear what my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary said a few moments ago, either. The position is that we negotiated an opt-out at Maastricht, which means that we were left free to decide for ourselves in due course, if and when the situation arose, whether to join an economic and monetary union.

We are now taking part in the discussions on what form that monetary union may take and, in due course, if any states go ahead, Britain will decide one way or the other. The decision, in my opinion, ought to be taken on a hard-nosed judgment of British interests, judged when we see what the details are. That is the principle on which the party of which I am a member fought the last general election and it is the policy recently restated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It is plainly the only sensible policy to pursue until we see whether economic and monetary union is going ahead in the EU.

Inflation

3. **Mr. Knapman:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how long the underlying rate of inflation has been at or around its current level. [27034]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The retail prices index figures published this morning show that underlying inflation was 2.7 per cent. in May. Inflation has now been below 3 per cent. for 20 months, which is our best performance since 1961.

Mr. Knapman: I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on his speech at the Mansion house last night. Does he agree that the careful control of inflation is absolutely essential for the promotion and protection of the prosperity of middle England, especially those on lower incomes?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. Anyone who aspires to govern this country and deliver the sustained recovery, without a return to boom and bust, that I think the population want must have a clear objective for inflation and must be capable of delivering it. We have a clear objective. We have been delivering low inflation. Those who criticise us appear to be incapable of making any useful contribution to the debate whatsoever.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: Does the Chancellor accept that his 2.7 per cent. figure for underlying inflation is above his long-term target and that the Bank of England said last month that it would continue to be above his long-term target in two years' time? If that is the case next month, will he take action—yes or no? When he said that he was putting inflation back in the box, did he omit to tell us that there was no lid on the box?

Mr. Clarke: If the Liberal party or the Labour party would give us any figures at all as a basis for their economic policy, we should be able to judge whether they were capable of getting within 0.2 per cent. of anything. The current position is that we have delivered the best record on inflation since the early 1960s. That is one of the principal reasons why our economy is growing and our prospects are looking so much better. Last night, I made it quite clear that I would set policy for the foreseeable future on the basis that we were aiming at inflation of 2½ per cent. or less. We aim to get there by the end of this Parliament and we shall aim to keep it there thereafter. That is a clear policy, and we are showing ourselves capable of delivering it.

Mr. John Townend: I, too, congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the speech that he made last night, and especially on his statement that he wanted to follow the iron lady and become the iron Chancellor who is not for turning. Does he accept that I also welcome his warning to fellow Cabinet colleagues and, indeed, to Back-Bench colleagues, that he wants to cut taxes, but that he can do so only if he can cut spending?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend and I agree strongly on that point. The Government are showing that they are capable of controlling public spending in order to achieve our low taxation goal. We think that we shall have a more successful and competitive economy, with more prosperity and more secure jobs, if we can reduce the proportion of national resources taken by the state. It is yet another sphere in which, as far as I am aware, we do not have the slightest indication from the Opposition about what proportion of GDP they think should be taken by the state, what their objectives are for taxation or

precisely what their views are on public spending, or at least how those of the Treasury relate to those of other Opposition spokesmen.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Will the Chancellor explain his extraordinary memorandum to Conservative Back Benchers last night? Why, having told the City that he would keep within his 4 per cent. inflation target all the time, did he say to his Back Benchers that he might meet it only most of the time? Why does he say one thing to the country and another in secret to the Conservative party?

Mr. Clarke: The document to which the hon. Gentleman referred was not especially secret. The policy that it sets out is exactly the same as that about which I spoke last night. The inflation target is 2½ per cent. or less which will, in practice, deliver inflation within a range of 1 to 4 per cent. That is the policy that we have been pursuing successfully, and I projected it forward.

Will the hon. Gentleman explain his extraordinary silence on the whole matter? He cannot even reply to letters from me in which I asked what inflation target he has in mind or whether he agrees with the decision that I took on interest rates more than a month ago. There is no piece of paper containing any details of any Labour policy on any these issues.

Mr. Dunn: The Government have made known their inflation target. Will my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor confirm when he last asked the shadow Chancellor to make known his inflation target and say what response he received?

Mr. Clarke: I think that we should take a leaf out of the Opposition's book and ask the Leader of the Opposition to hold an independent inquiry into whether the shadow Chancellor has an economic policy and, if he claims to have an economic policy, whether he is prepared to put a figure to it. At the moment, I find myself facing shadows, but invisible shadows who will not put forward any proposition of their own. The hon. Gentleman has lost his way on economic policy.

Fiscal Policy

4. **Mr. MacShane:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what meetings he has had in 1995 with the Trades Union Congress to discuss fiscal policy. [27035]

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Sir George Young): My right hon. and learned Friend has had no meetings so far this year with the TUC to discuss fiscal policy, but does expect to meet representatives of the TUC in the autumn before the Budget.

Mr. MacShane: May I put it to the Minister that, if this country is to make any serious progress on its economic policy, discussion with the body that represents 7 million people in industry on a regular, not corporate, basis is necessary and would be useful and that, until there is a renewal of dialogue across the industrial divide, Britain cannot expect fully to prosper?

Sir George Young: As I said, my right hon. and learned Friend looks forward to meeting the TUC against a background of the discussions leading up to his Budget. He had two meetings with the TUC last year, at the first of which there was very constructive dialogue about what the Government were doing on training, which received wide support from the TUC, and also what we were doing on the industrial finance initiative. When the TUC comes to discuss fiscal policy with my right hon. and learned Friend, at least there is a policy to discuss.

Mr. Butterfill: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the TUC in the autumn, will he take that opportunity to explain to it the extraordinary damage that would be done to our economy were we to adopt a national minimum wage? It would create massive unemployment, particularly in the holiday industry, which is so important to my constituency.

Sir George Young: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend would wish to make that point in a courteous but firm way. I was interested to see, in *The Guardian* on Monday, that the general secretary of Unison conceded that, were we to move towards a minimum wage, at the level at which he preferred, there would be job losses. There have been some estimates that there could be up to 800,000 job losses. My right hon. and learned Friend, who minds about unemployment, will indeed make that point to the TUC.

Mr. William Ross: Will the Minister give me an assurance that the fiscal policy that he is going to follow is a United Kingdom fiscal policy and that the blandishments from Dublin to the effect that there should be 25 per cent. value added tax and 10 per cent. corporation tax in Northern Ireland will be resisted?

Sir George Young: Yes, what my right hon. and learned Friend said at the Mansion house, the economic policy that he puts forward, is an economic policy for the United Kingdom.

Inflation

5. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received concerning the control of inflation. [27036]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have received many representations about the control of inflation. These reinforce my commitment to our objective of permanently low inflation.

Mr. Clappison: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that consumers and business men in my constituency will welcome the long-term commitment to low inflation that he has given; but when he hears the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), will he exercise just a little caution, bearing in mind not only that the hon. Gentleman will not say what his inflation target is but that the one policy he does have—the introduction of a minimum wage—would cause inflation of its own accord, and that the last time the Labour party held office, inflation moved within a range of between 7 per cent. and 27 per cent. per year?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend does well to remind us of the record. The fact is that the hon. Gentleman does not say whether he would have a higher inflation target for the next Parliament, thereby loosening policy, or whether he would have a lower target, thereby tightening policy. He does not say that he agrees with the Government—which I suspect is the case—because he cannot think of anything else to do. If he indicated anything else, he would have to answer my question about what his views are on interest rates.

I do not think that the hon. Gentleman believes in a minimum wage. I do not think that his leader does. This sits in a quite silly fashion compared with the current speeches that they are making about the principles of economic policy. I do not know why they do not stop refusing to put a figure on that. They will not put a figure on anything. Why do they not just drop it and adopt the shadow, at least, of our policy without giving it any substance?

Mr. Sheldon: Although the control of inflation must be a prime objective, in what he called his occasionally combative discussions with the Governor of Bank of England, will the Chancellor forcefully point out to him that there are other matters, such as investment and economic growth, that must be considered also?

Mr. Clarke: I do not regard low inflation as an aim in itself, and nor does the right hon. Gentleman, but low inflation is an essential precondition to getting prosperity and secure jobs, and the economic success, which other countries, such as Germany and Japan, have enjoyed in the past because they have enjoyed stable economic conditions. That is why the Governor and I are agreed on pursuing the targets that I have set out. The Governor welcomed what I said last night, and I quote:

"The Chancellor has restated the Government's monetary policy objective—permanently low inflation—quite unambiguously this evening. I very much welcome that."

I look forward to continuing to work with the Governor to deliver that low inflation aim.

Mr. Brandreth: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that among the key groups who welcome low inflation and targeted low inflation are the elderly and the prudent? Does he recognise that in the year, for example, when my own father retired on a fixed income, inflation topped 27 per cent. under the previous Labour Government, and that retired and prudent people today will welcome a governing party that has a firm, precise and deliverable target for low inflation?

Mr. Clarke: I agree with my hon. Friend. He echoes the views of what I call middle England, which, for the benefit of Scottish nationalists, is middle Scotland as well. Those people who wish to work and to be responsible for their families, to save and to feel secure in their family finances, need low inflation. The experience of high inflation is that it destroys savings and creates instability in society. It robs the elderly and gives money to the improvident and those who borrow. It is also very destructive for investment and long-term economic prospects. For the past 20 months, we have delivered the best record on inflation that this country has seen since the early 1960s. I set out last night the Government's determination to continue to deliver that.

Mr. Ashton: I take it that it is in order to ask a question from the Government crib sheet which has been handed to Conservative Back Benchers and which my hon. Friend the Member for Hemsworth (Mr. Enright) found in a telephone box. Is the Chancellor aware that my constituents would prefer sound economics to soundbites on the management of the economy? Why does the Chancellor have to write down all these soundbites for all the people behind him?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has made an extremely good point. I assume that those who are responsible for that are in Conservative central office, and I shall ask them next time to distribute a similar sheet to Opposition Members so that they can find some questions to ask, because the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer does not have a policy that is worth leaving on a piece of paper in a telephone box and he is giving no guidance whatever to those behind him.

Mr. Forman: I preface my question by saying that I have not had a chance to visit a phone box. However, I have a question for my right hon. and learned Friend. Is he aware that his counter-inflation policies have a real test behind them—market credibility? The record shows that the markets believe in that credibility and in that of the Governor of the Bank of England and the aim of getting inflation down and keeping it down. Is not the real contrast between my right hon. and learned Friend's sound policies, which will add to future growth, and those of the Opposition, that his have the ring of clarity whereas those of the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) are surrounded by a number of obscurities?

Mr. Clarke: The Governor, in his speech last night, said that we seemed to be on course to see a peak of interest rates in this cycle of about half or less of the peak they reached in the previous cycle. My hon. Friend is right about market expectations on inflation and interest rates, which are coming down steadily as well. That is of real value to business, to investment and to people with mortgages who want to know what might happen to future interest rates. As we deliver, we are building confidence in a sustained recovery with low inflation, and it would be absolute folly to put all that at risk, certainly under pressure from a policy which is not represented by a figure on a piece of paper.

Mr. Darling: May I refer the Chancellor again to the private note that he sent to Conservative Members? It is printed on Treasury notepaper and the accompanying note is in the same type face as the Treasury press release. Therefore, it is not just a "piece of paper", as the Chancellor said. When he told Conservatives privately that the inflation target would be met only "most" of the time, was he giving Back Benchers a nod and a wink that he will take risks with inflation if that is needed to try to win the next election for the Conservative party?

Mr. Clarke: If the hon. Gentleman is going to get our briefing notes, he might read them and quote them properly. He paraphrases in the most loose and untidy fashion and he got it wrong. The inflation target that is set out in that note is the same as the target set out in my speech—2½ per cent. or below. As I explained in my speech last night, in practice one does not deliver one figure every month: there is fluctuation, sometimes down and sometimes above, but setting policy every month at that target should deliver inflation of between 1 and 4 per cent. The target is 2½ per cent. or less and that is the basis on which I shall set policy month by month when I have discussions with the Governor. It could not be plainer, it is as plain as a pikestaff, and the briefing said nothing different from that. It is the only policy going in this country at the moment. Fortunately, it is delivering considerable success.

Unemployment

6. **Mr. Booth:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the economic benefits of falling unemployment. [27037]

Mr. Aitken: Unemployment has fallen by 661,000 since December 1992. Our assessment is that this has made a major contribution towards the Government's aim of promoting rising prosperity for all.

Mr. Booth: As unemployment in Finchley has fallen by 16 per cent. over the past year, I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his assessment of unemployment. Has he taken time to look at unemployment in France and Spain, and do not the very much worse figures in those countries exist because they have adopted just the sort of policies that the Labour party would impose on us?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is right to highlight the fact that in Britain unemployment is falling faster than in any other major country in the European Union and that it is far lower than in France and Spain. Youth unemployment is 50 per cent. higher in France and 250 per cent. higher in Spain than in Britain. My hon. Friend asks why those differences, which are so much in our favour, have occurred. The answer is that those countries have the minimum wage; we do not. Those countries have a social chapter; we have opted out of a social chapter. Those countries have rigid labour markets; we have deregulation. We have Conservative free market, supply-side reforms and policies, whereas France and Spain have continued to cling to the same tired old socialist policies that the Labour party still espouses.

Ms Armstrong: I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman recognises that many of the problems that he has identified have led in this country to job insecurity, which I know is a matter about which he himself is concerned. Has he noticed that a survey said yesterday that more people in work are increasingly insecure about the future and worried about losing their job? Does he not understand that that insecurity, coupled with the still far too high unemployment levels, mean that much of the Government's strategy for economic growth is put under threat?

Mr. Aitken: That is a feeble retort to the case that I made in the supplementary answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Finchley (Mr. Booth). As he reminded us, unemployment in his constituency has come down by 16 per cent., so people are not feeling so insecure in Finchley. Since December 1992, unemployment in Durham, North-West, which the hon. Lady represents, has come down by nearly 1,000 people—a fall of 23.3 per cent., so she does not have much to complain about.

Mr. Gallie: In response to the hon. Member for Durham, North-West (Ms Armstrong), does my right hon. Friend agree that the greatest threat to workers' jobs would come with the election of a Labour Government and that therein lies the greatest feeling of insecurity?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There are many Labour policies, such as a minimum wage, that will destroy jobs. He represents a constituency in Scotland and he will be well aware that the policies for a tax-raising Scottish Assembly are absolutely guaranteed to scare away the magnificent flow of inward investment projects that are coming into Scotland at a rate of two a week—they will go as soon as there is a tax-raising Scottish Parliament. All the extra policies, such as the minimum wage, and all the high expenditure will destroy jobs faster than anything else.

Housing Market

8. **Mr. Corbett:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the financial implications of the state of the housing market. [27039]

The Paymaster General (Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory): For the average mortgage holder, housing costs are £1,600 per annum lower than in 1990.

Mr. Corbett: The Minister's complacency about the housing crisis will appal millions of people. With cuts in tax relief on mortgages costing £20 a month and, from October, another £20 a month for people on income support, why is it that the Government keep on hurting home owners rather than helping them?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: I am not the slightest bit complacent about people who find themselves with negative equity, but I am entitled to point out that, as a result of lower inflation and lower interest rates, since 1990 the average mortgage holder is £130 a month better off. The best long-term policy to help those existing householders and people who wish to own their houses is sustainable growth, with its consequence of rising earnings, combined with low inflation, which is what we are delivering.

Mr. Rowe: Did my hon. Friend experience, as I did at the height of the housing boom, large numbers of constituents saying how extremely worried they were about the prospects of their children being able to get on the housing ladder? Do not steady and reduced house prices make it much easier for young people to get started?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend is right. The conditions of the housing boom—such as those that we experienced—are not the friend of householders, especially young people who wish to own their houses. Although there is a problem of negative equity at present, its extent has reduced. Indeed, we should remember that last year almost 500,000 people became house owners for the first time.

Ms Primarolo: Did the Paymaster General hear the unfortunate comments by the Chancellor on the "Today" programme this morning when he ruled out any special measures to help home owners? Will he confirm that that complacent view will continue and that there is to be no assistance for home owners in the present housing crisis?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My right hon. and learned Friend is not the least bit complacent about this issue, but he is right to point out that the best long-term help that we can deliver to households, as to others sectors of the economy, is sustainable growth with low inflation, which is exactly what we are delivering.

Dr. Spink: What would be the impact on the housing market and interest rates if my hon. Friend were to follow the Labour party's policy on inflation—or does he not know?

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: My hon. Friend is right. High inflation, with the consequence of high interest rates,

would crucify householders with outstanding mortgages. We must never allow the Labour party to be given a chance.

Interest Rates

9. **Mr. Simon Hughes:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his policy on interest rates. [27040]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Interest rates are set to deliver permanently low inflation and ensure that the present healthy recovery is sustained.

Mr. Hughes: Is not the truth somewhat different? Has not the *Financial Times* got it right when it says that the Chancellor has fudged policy on interest rates and that he is keeping interest rates down, stoking the economy and preparing for short-term tax cuts as his preferred solution?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman has just arrived in the Chamber out of breath and did not hear the rather lengthy exchanges that have already taken place about all this. The inflation target is 2½ per cent. or less. I set monetary policy to achieve that target. Given that there are always unpredictable things from month to month, that policy will keep inflation between 1 per cent. and 4 per cent. We have set that target for the end of this Parliament and we are well on course to deliver it. Now we are going to sustain it throughout the next Parliament as well.

Tax cuts are a legitimate aim. To be a competitive economy, we need to continue to be a low-taxation economy. But we can do that only when spending is under control—it is being kept under control—and when it is in the interests of the economy we can then cut tax.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one way to ensure that interest rates are higher than necessary is to have no policy on inflation, no policy on public expenditure and no policy on taxation, like the Labour party?

Mr. Clarke: I rather imagine that if the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) ever met the Governor of the Bank of England he would ask him for a quick little note on what monetary policy is for and how one ought to approach it. When the hon. Gentleman sets out his propositions and they are put alongside the spending promises of all his shadow colleagues, it is quite obvious that high inflation will be only one of the extremely bad consequences of having a Labour Government.

Mr. Foulkes: Is not it true that, on interest rates, the Chancellor pays more attention to the representations of Tory Back Benchers in marginal seats than to the Governor of the Bank of England? *[Interruption.]* Is not that more to do with his medium-term aspirations to be Leader of the Opposition than the long-term interests of British people?

Mr. Clarke: I take first and foremost the advice of the Governor of the Bank of England. I listen to the advice of my Back-Bench colleagues who understand economic policy and specialise in it. I do not get any advice from the Labour party because it does not seem to have any opinion on the subject. My policies have delivered the best record of inflation that this country has seen since the early 1960s. We are well on course to deliver permanently low inflation for the rest of the decade.

Public Spending

10. **Mr. Amess:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if it is his policy to reduce public spending as a percentage of gross domestic product. [27042]

Mr. Aitken: Yes. The Government's policy, unlike that of the Labour party, is to reduce the share of national income taken by the state.

Mr. Amess: I welcome my right hon. Friend's robust commitment to controlling state expenditure. Will he confirm that that is in marked contrast to new Labour, which apparently has no commitment to increase spending, taxation or borrowing, but which in reality can be relied upon to increase all three?

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is right. Scratch the soundbites of new Labour and we find old spending Labour in full swing. Let me list, for the benefit of my hon. Friend and of the House, the high spending to which the Labour party is committed. It includes income support for 16 and 17-year-olds, new regional assemblies and development agencies, an emergency employment programme, a defence conversion agency, a flexible decade of retirement, and above all, a national minimum wage. Labour is still the same old high-spending party, and it will be a high taxation party too.

Ms Eagle: After 16 years in power, is it not a demonstration of the Government's utter failure that GDP continues to rise because they are paying the cost of economic failure by keeping so many people on the dole, at a cost of £9,000 per person? When will the Government tackle the problems rather than the symptoms of their utter failure to adopt a decent economic policy?

Mr. Aitken: As the hon. Lady is so interested in the public expenditure dimension of unemployment—I take it that that is what her question is about—she may like to know that the unemployment total is falling at a rate of 1,000 per day. Every time 100,000 people come off the unemployment register, £400 million or so is saved in public expenditure. That is good news for the taxpayer as well as for the unemployed people who become employed.

Brown's Law of Economics

11. **Mrs. Lait:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what study his Department has made of Brown's law of economics. [27043]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Brown's law is receiving the study that it deserves.

Mrs. Lait: As my right hon. and learned Friend continues his study of Brown's law, does he agree that its contention that borrowing should not exceed investment is a useless guide to sound public finance, as it sets no level for investment or for borrowing and clearly avoids setting any inflation target, let alone one as low as 2.5 per cent.?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend is correct. That is one of the few specific statements that the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East put into Brown's law, but upon closer examination it turns out to be simply an excuse for having

no limit on the amount of borrowing on which one can embark in any one year. That is one of the many examples of what the policy would mean, and it would represent a considerable loosening of present policy, although the hon. Gentleman claims that Labour could match the growth with low inflation that the Government have achieved.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Would not the costs of speculative and widespread currency exchange transactions be greatly reduced, indeed ended, if we had a single European currency? How long must British tourists throughout Europe continue to be ripped off by banks because politicians cannot face their responsibilities?

Mr. Clarke: It is tautologous to say that economic and monetary union would get rid of wild fluctuations in currencies and transaction costs across the foreign exchanges. We have preserved the position that will allow us to choose whether to join in economic and monetary union with the other European member states once the details have been put in place and when we see the conditions for convergence. We shall then decide whether it will be in Britain's interests to join.

Mr. McLoughlin: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the true principles of Brown's law is to reverse the Government's trade union reforms? Would not one of those reversals mean that people such as Mr. Jack Dromey would not be able to challenge Mr. Bill Morris for the general secretaryship of the Transport and General Workers' Union? Would it not be a great pity if Mr. Dromey were prevented from earning income to support his family?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I am certainly not going to take a position on the internal battles of the Transport and General Workers Union. It is true that the Labour party is a little more precise in what it believes it will do so far as trade union law is concerned than it is on economic policy. If Brown's law sheds any light on the future control of the trade union movement over Labour policy, I suppose it has some value.

Small Investors

12. **Mr. Sheerman:** To ask the Chancellor ofthe Exchequer what steps he is taking to increase the influence of small investors in corporate governance. [27044]

Sir George Young: I expect that the work of the Greenbury committee, and the successor to the Cadbury committee will continue to bring improvements in corporate governance.

Mr. Sheerman: Is the Minister aware that many small shareholders in middle England would have thought that the Chancellor was an iron Chancellor if he had used his speech last night at the Mansion House to tell the City's institutional barons that it is about time they cleaned up their act, and stopped using their block vote to deprive ordinary shareholders of a voice at the annual meetings of companies?

Sir George Young: The average small shareholder has done well under a Conservative Government. Since 1979, the average small shareholder with a portfolio of UK shares will have seen a real rate of return of 10 per cent. per annum. The Government have extended the benefits of shareholding. There were 3 million shareholders when we started, while there are 10 million today.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Mans:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 June. [27062]

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): I have been asked to reply.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is currently in Canada attending the G7 conference.

Mr. Mans: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the release of the remaining members of the Welch Fusiliers and of the RAF flight lieutenant by the Bosnian Serbs shows clearly that the Government's robust response to the taking of the hostages was the right one? Does he further agree that we now have an opportunity to reassess how our diplomatic and military efforts in Bosnia can best be taken forward?

Mr. Newton: The whole House will want to join in my hon. Friend's welcome of the release of nearly all of the remaining hostages, including the British ones, and it is essential in our view that the other 26 are released immediately. My hon. Friend was right to say that the Government's policy has been vindicated. Indeed, by standing firm, the whole international community has shown that it will not submit to blackmail and terrorism of that kind. I share the view implicit in my hon. Friend's remarks that it is vital that we redouble our efforts to achieve a negotiated settlement.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Leader of the House think that it is really wise for the Prime Minister to be out of the country at this time?

Mr. Newton: At a time when it is widely acknowledged throughout the international community that this country's economic performance in growth, increasing investment, improving our trade performance, keeping inflation down and reducing unemployment makes it a world leader in that respect, it is quite right that my right hon. Friend should be sharing our experience with our partners in the G7.

Mr. Prescott: With Baroness Thatcher making it clear that the Prime Minister is not up to the job, the President of the Board of Trade professing loyalty while preparing to take over the Prime Minister's job and the Chancellor attacking his Tory critics as right-wing xenophobes, is not it obvious that the Tory party is in a state of civil war and, like the Prime Minister, is clearly unfit to govern this country?

Mr. Newton: If the right hon. Gentleman believes that—against the background of the account of our successful economic policies which I have just given—he will believe anything. He might also explain why his right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition took the risk of letting him ask questions from the Dispatch Box today. *[Interruption.]*

Madam Speaker: Order.

Q2. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 June. [27063]

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Field: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's trade union reforms reintroduced democracy into the Labour movement? Will he therefore ask the committee considering the Nolan report whether the 165 Members of the parliamentary Labour party who are sponsored by trade unions will resign if the long-overdue reform of the trade union block vote does not go ahead? In particular, if the Transport and General Workers Union gives that reform the order of the sharp elbow, will the Leader of the Opposition sever all his links with that union?

Mr. Newton: I am not quite in a position to give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks because the committee to which he refers has not yet met and, therefore, has not made a decision about who should be its chairman. In one way or another, however, I will ensure that my hon. Friend's request is drawn to the committee's attention. No doubt the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) will draw the second half of my hon. Friend's question to the attention of his right hon. Friend, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Ashdown: Is not it absolutely clear from the Chancellor of the Exchequer's statement last night that, when it comes to a policy on inflation, the Government's policy is very clear—a target is a target, but only so long as it does not get in the way of a tax cut?

Mr. Newton: What is clear from my right hon. and learned Friend's speech last night is that the Government's commitment to low inflation remains absolutely unshakeable and clear and that the commitment to low inflation is part of a range of policies, which I have already described and which will make it possible for us to consider tax cuts in due course when it is appropriate and responsible to do so.

Q3. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 June. [27064]

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Heald: Will my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming this week's further fall in unemployment, which is down for the 21st month in a row and down 500,000 in the past two years? Does he agree that it is not coincidence, but the result of the Government's policies and that if we had a guaranteed minimum wage as the Labour party suggests—it is no good the right hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) looking glum as he has admitted this—there would be a shake-out of jobs and any silly fool knows that? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in the interests of Britain, that policy must be reversed?

Mr. Newton: Although it is sometimes difficult to glean from the observations of the Opposition, I imagine that the whole House will welcome the fact that unemployment has fallen by 350,000 in the past year and, indeed, that employment has grown by more than 170,000 in the year to March. I see the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) giggling in some way—it is especially ironic that, not so long ago, he forecast that unemployment would go on rising month in and month out. No doubt he will be reassessing his forecasting methods. At the same time, he might reassess policies such as the social chapter and the minimum wage, which would certainly push things in the other direction.

Mr. Madden: May I ask the Leader of the House a question, of which I gave the Prime Minister notice on Tuesday; will he comment on the tragic events in Bradford at the weekend? In condemning without reservation those who commit serious criminal damage, does the Leader of the House share my deep concern about the large number of very young people who are so deeply angry, disaffected and alienated, not only in Bradford but in many other inner cities throughout the country? Will he support an independent public inquiry to establish what happened in Bradford—*[Interruption.]* If the House—

Madam Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will come to his point as I have other questioners to call.

Mr. Madden: But this is a serious matter to the majority of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Will the right hon. Gentleman support an independent public inquiry, which can identify the causes of the serious public disorder that took place in Bradford at the weekend and draw attention to the action that can be taken by all public agencies, including the Government, to bring back hope to young people, their parents and local communities?

Mr. Newton: First, I am grateful, as everyone in the House will be, for the hon. Gentleman's initial acknowledgement that, whatever arguments he or anyone else cares to adduce, we all agree that there can be no excuse for the kind of behaviour that we saw in Bradford at the weekend.

So far as the inquiries are concerned, the hon. Gentleman will know that the Police Complaints Authority is supervising the investigation of a number of complaints made against the police during the weekend. That authority is independent and will do a thorough job. The work will be undertaken by officers from another force—

Mr. Madden *indicated assent.*

Mr. Newton: I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman acknowledge that. I think that that is the appropriate action to take.

As for the rest of what the hon. Gentleman said, I am glad to know that discussions are now taking place between the police and members of the Asian community in Bradford. That is the way to explore other problems.

Q4. **Mr. Hendry:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 June. [27065]

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hendry: Has my right hon. Friend ever seen a shred of evidence that suggests that people in this country want more government rather than less? Is he aware that my constituents in High Peak would be horrified at the

prospect of another tier of regional government based perhaps 100 miles away in Leicestershire? Is not it time for those people who advocate such a policy to admit that what they are really saying is that we should have more bureaucracy, more waste, more remoteness and more taxes?

Mr. Newton: Labour's plans for regional government would certainly end up simply sucking responsibility away from many existing councils that are closer to the people whom they represent. As one of Labour's think tanks made clear yesterday, English regions would be "essentially artificial constructs", which is true of more or less the whole of Labour's policy in that area.

Mr. Macdonald: Is the Leader of the House aware of the growing anger, not just in Britain but on the continent, about the plan to dump the Brent Spar oil platform at sea, at a spot not more than 150 miles from my constituency? Is not it a disgrace that Shell should have tried to hide the true costs of recycling the oil platform on land? Is not it time that the Government intervened to halt the tow of the Brent Spar and allow a proper examination of the true benefits of recycling on land, which would be better for the environment and for jobs?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman knows that the Government are following the principle of disposal on a case-by-case basis. In the Government's view, the deep-sea disposal of Brent Spar is consistent with the UK's international commitment, and all necessary approvals and consents have been obtained. It is also the Government's view that it is the best practicable environmental option available.

Q5. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 June. [27067]

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Jenkin: Will my right hon. Friend draw the Prime Minister's attention to last week's report by the Social Security Select Committee into the growth of social security, which vindicates the Government's view that the continuing growth of social security spending is a cause for concern? Is it not time that we tackled that problem? Is not the test of the Opposition whether they start to support those reforms, otherwise they betray the fact that they have no commitment to dealing with the growth of public expenditure?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to that matter. The increase in social security expenditure in its various forms, under various pressures including demographic trends, is a matter of concern throughout the western world and perhaps beyond. Against that background, it has been absolutely right for my right hon. Friend to look carefully at the social security system to ensure that the bill is constrained while at the same time meeting proper priorities. That is what he seeks to do and it deserves the support of hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Q6. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Thursday 15 June. [27068]

Mr. Newton: I have been asked to reply.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave some moments ago.

Mrs. Campbell: Will the Leader of the House ask the Prime Minister whether, while considering what to do about the damage that his Government have caused to home owners with negative equity, he will consider the misery caused by the removal of mortgage interest relief to those who are unemployed and the damage caused to those who need social housing by the £600 million of cuts to housing associations?

Mr. Newton: I shall always draw the hon. Lady's questions to the attention of my right hon. Friends. However, she might have referred to the fact that negative equity and repossessions are sharply down since the 1991-92 peak, and that average mortgage payments have fallen by £130 a month since October 1990. On the hon. Lady's first point, a survey has shown that two thirds of lenders intend to buy block protection in the area to which she referred, and the majority of those, including the Skipton building society, to which my right hon. Friend referred last week, intend to make no charge.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that, in the county of Gloucestershire, under the profligate Lib-Lab pact local government, the schoolchildren are being cruelly misused? Is he aware that, as a result of the historic overspending in Gloucestershire, the county council has decided to cut spending on education? Is he further aware that some of us are tired of being a whipping boy for Lib-Lab extravagance, and that it is time that we considered lifting the cap on local authority expenditure?

Mr. Newton: I see that it has been reported in some parts of the press that the Leader of the Opposition has managed to persuade the Labour councillors of Mid-Glamorgan to reduce their demands for increased allowances from the exorbitant to the extortionate. I hope that he might now use his influence with some other Labour local authorities to persuade them to pursue sensible and proper policies.

Business of the House

3.30 pm

Mrs. Ann Taylor (Dewsbury): May I ask the Leader of the House for details of future business?

The Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. Tony Newton): The next instalment of the serial. The business for next week will be as follows:

MONDAY 19 JUNE—Opposition Day (14th allotted day). Until about 7 o'clock there will be a debate entitled "The Need for an Independent Inquiry into the BMARC Affair", followed by a debate entitled "Government Failure on Overseas Aid". Both debates will arise, I need hardly say, on Opposition motions.

TUESDAY 20 JUNE—Until about 7 o'clock, Second Reading of the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill (Lords). Remaining stages of the Town and Country Planning (Costs of Inquiries, etc.) Bill.

WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE—Until 2.30 pm, there will be debates on the motion for the Adjournment of the House.

Debate on the European Union on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

THURSDAY 22 JUNE—Remaining stages of the Crown Agents Bill (Lords).

FRIDAY 23 JUNE—The House will not be sitting.

The House will also wish to know that European Standing Committee B will meet at 10.30 am on Wednesday 21 June to consider European Community document No. 10911/94 relating to economic growth and the environment.

MONDAY 26 JUNE—I understand that the Chairman of Ways and Means is expected to name opposed private business for consideration. In addition, the House will be invited to consider Lords Amendments to the Health Authorities Bill and to the Jobseekers Bill.

Subject to the progress of business, it will be proposed that the remaining stages of the Environment Bill (Lords) are taken on Tuesday 27 June and Wednesday 28 June. Government business will also be taken on Thursday 29 June and Friday 30 June, which, in the case of that Friday, is a sitting day. I should say, however, that I would expect the business on the Friday to be on a motion for the Adjournment.

[Wednesday 21 June: Debate on the European Union—Relevant Documents: White paper on Developments in the European Union January-June 1994 (Cm 2675); White paper on Developments in the European Union July-December 1994 (Cm 2798); European Community document COM (95) 333 relating to the Green paper on the practical arrangement of the introduction of the single currency; Unnumbered explanatory memorandum of 6 June 1995 submitted by Her Majesty's Treasury on the European Commission's recommendation for the broad guidelines of the economic policies of the member states and the community, drawn up in conformity with article 103 (2) of the Treaty establishing the European Community; European Community document EP: A4—0102/95 relating to a European Parliament Resolution on the Functioning of the Treaty on European Union with a View to the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference—Implementation and Development of the Union; European Community Document SEC (95) relating to the Report of the European Commission on the operation of the Treaty of the European Union; Report of the Council of the European Union on the Functioning of the Treaty of the European Union (Cm 2866); Report by the Court of Auditor to the "Reflection Group" on the operation of the Treaty of European Union; Report of the Court of Justice on Certain Aspects of the Application of the Treaty on European Union; European Community Document 7221/95 relating to the White paper: Preparation of the Associated Countries of Central and Eastern Europe for integration into the internal market of the Union; European Community Document 12269/94 relating to a Commission communication on recognition of qualifications for academic and professional purposes; Letters from the Minister of State at the Department of Employment to the Chairman of the House of Commons European Legislation Committee dated 23/3/95 and 31/3/95 concerning a Resolution on the implementation of directives in the social field.

European Standing Committee B—European Community document: 10911/94, Economic Growth and the Environment. Relevant European Legislation Report: HC 70-iv (1994-95).]

Mrs. Taylor: I thank the Leader of the House for that information. Regarding the Jobseekers Bill, which the Leader of the House has announced will appear before the House again on Monday week, when will Ministers give an indication of whether they intend to accept their defeats in the House of Lords? Will the Leader of the House ensure that full information about that is supplied before the deadline for the tabling of amendments, so that decisions can be taken after proper consultation, discussion and reflection, because those amendments will have to be tabled next week?

Secondly, may I ask the Leader of the House about the Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill? Victims of crime throughout the country will not understand the Government's refusal to have a proper debate on the Bill. They will also fail to understand the Government's reluctance to disclose the fact that millions of crime victims who are self-employed or on low pay will lose under the new system as a result of the new time limit that Ministers are trying to smuggle through the Parliament. The Bill went into Committee only a week ago today. Will the Leader of the House give an assurance this afternoon that all aspects of the Government's changes to the system will be considered fully in Committee?

Thirdly, will the Leader of the House arrange for the Secretary of State for Employment to make a statement next week about the outcome of the International Labour Organisation annual conference which is taking place this week in Geneva? It has issued a statement deeply regretting and deploring the failure of British Ministers to solve the problem of the trade union ban at Government communications headquarters. Will Her Majesty's Government accept the proposed ILO mission to arbitrate in the matter of the trade union membership ban?

Finally, I press the Leader of the House yet again for a debate on the economy. I have raised the matter several times during business questions, as have hon. Members on both sides of the House. We must have an economic debate before the Budget statement. The Leader of the House must recognise that an economic debate is becoming increasingly urgent, not least because of questions surrounding the Chancellor's words last night

and the central office briefing. When will we have an economic debate, and when will we know the date of the Budget statement in the autumn?

Mr. Newton: I am in a position to respond somewhat more positively to the hon. Lady's final questions than to some of her earlier ones. That probably means that I should conclude my remarks by responding to her latter questions, but I shall go straight to them now.

We need to have a debate on the economy before the summer recess. I must obviously add a qualification about uncertainties at this stage, but it is my intention—subject to those uncertainties—to have a debate on the economy on Wednesday 12 July. I can inform the House that my right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposes to introduce his Budget statement on Tuesday 28 November.

I now turn to the hon. Lady's other questions. So far as the Jobseekers Bill is concerned, I can do no more than ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment is aware of the hon. Lady's request. I shall bring the hon. Lady's request for a statement to the attention of the Secretary of State, but I make it clear that the Government do not accept that their policies in respect of GCHQ are inconsistent with their obligations to the International Labour Organisation.

I have not yet received an account of this morning's proceedings on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill in Committee. As with any legislation, the Government are concerned to see that it is discussed properly in the appropriate manner, while taking account of the need to make progress.

Sir Anthony Grant (Cambridgeshire, South-West): Has my right hon. Friend noticed in recent years the slow, inexorable intrusion of the judiciary into the business of the Executive and of the legislature? Does he share my view that the first principle of parliamentary democracy is that Parliament is answerable not to outside bodies or persons, no matter how eminent, but to the electorate alone? Will it be possible to have a general debate on that increasing constitutional problem?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's concern and the request that he has made, although I am certainly not in a position to undertake to make time available for an early debate on that matter. We need to bear in mind the fact that it is for the courts to interpret the laws passed by Parliament. If that interpretation turns out to be different from what was intended, Parliament must then decide whether to change the law.

Ms Liz Lynne (Rochdale): Following the petition that I delivered to 10 Downing street about the crime rate in the north-west and the recent debate on drugs in the House, will the Leader of the House make time for debate next week on the causes of crime, particularly the link between drug abuse and crime?

Mr. Newton: I understand why the hon. Lady raised that point. No doubt she was unable to be here last Friday, when we had a full debate, to which her Front Bench contributed, on drug abuse. However, I cannot promise a further early opportunity.

Mr. John Butcher (Coventry, South-West): May I support the hon. Member for Rochdale (Ms Lynne) in calling for a debate on law and order? What society have we become, when evil and violent people can randomly select a woman on the streets of London, take her away and rape her with impunity, because they no longer fear the law?

During such a debate, may we examine why the Tory party, the Cabinet and successive Home Secretaries are united and vehement in their defence of law and order, but when the law is administered out there in the country, the civil liberties of criminals seem to be safeguarded more vigorously than those of the population at large?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that the House will agree that it is important to strike the right balance. Neither aspect of civil liberty to which my hon. Friend has referred can be ignored. He will be aware that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary, by proposed changes in the law and reforms in the organisation and management of police forces, is seeking to direct attention firmly and strongly to exactly such concerns as my hon. Friend has expressed.

Mr. Eddie Loyden (Liverpool, Garston): Is the Leader of the House aware of the widespread concern in the House about the Derbyshire? The House should know that the two objectives of the inquiry are the Derbyshire itself and the wider issue of safety at sea. There is concern that Lord Donaldson's terms of reference fall far short of what is required to reach those objectives. Will the Leader of the House ensure that the terms of reference are published and copies placed in the House of Commons, so that hon. Members can see them?

Mr. Newton: I have several times paid my respects and those of the whole House to the way in which the hon. Gentleman has followed this matter over a long period. In that spirit, I shall draw his request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Has my right hon. Friend seen that a jury today returned a verdict in favour of Mr. Souness in respect of the disgraceful libel by a national paper, the *Daily Mirror*, about the personal life of Mr. Souness? Can hon. Friend say when we shall have a privacy Bill to put a stop to such behaviour by newspapers?

Mr. Newton: I am aware of my hon. Friend's strong interest in the subject, and understand it. Only this afternoon, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage is continuing work towards, among other matters, the response due to the Select Committee on National Heritage on that subject.

Mr. George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent, South): In view of the recent opinion poll showing that 63 per cent. of the population blame the Government for the housing crisis, and the Shelter report that 700,000 people have lost their homes due to repossessions since 1985, will the Leader of the House provide a debate in Government time to discuss what can only be described as a national scandal presided over by the Government of which he is a member?

Mr. Newton: I made some comments on related matters a few moments ago, wearing my deputising hat, and I cannot add to them.

Mr. John Marshall (Hendon, South): Has my right hon. Friend seen early-day motion 1219, which now has nearly 200 signatures?

[Mr. John Marshall]

[*That this House calls on the Government to acknowledge that over 3,000 people with haemophilia have been infected with the hepatitis C virus (HCV) as a result of NHS treatment with contaminated blood products to recognise that over 50 people with haemophilia are now understood to have died from liver disease contracted as a result, and to consider giving similar financial assistance to those infected with HCV, who currently receive no additional help, as for those infected in the same way with HIV who have been compensated by the Government.*]

Does he agree that it is morally and logically unfair to deny compensation to those who have been infected with hepatitis C, perhaps mortally, through treatment on the national health service?

Mr. Newton: Once again, I have good reason greatly to respect my hon. Friend's interest in such matters. It is, of course, an unhappy fact that the patients about whom he is concerned received the best treatment available in the light of medical knowledge at the time. He will acknowledge that to offer compensation when no negligence or neglect was demonstrated would be a significant and substantial step.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East) Would it not be advisable that the House, sooner rather than later, should debate the appalling social damage being done by the national lottery to the well-being of the folk of this country, and the total improprieties of the profit levels of the company running it?

Mr. Newton: Against the background of the huge sums of money being raised for the arts, sport, heritage and a number of other important social causes, the hon. Gentleman's description of the consequences of the lottery is—to put it mildly—an exaggeration. Secondly, Camelot's bid to run the lottery, which has proved such a great success, involved the lowest costs of the kind that the hon. Gentleman is talking about of any of the bids.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Would it be in order to make a helpful suggestion to the Government? There is to be a debate next week on Europe, so would it be possible for the Government to make a commitment to a referendum if ever a single currency were put before the country? In that way, the Government would be able to unite the right-wing xenophobes and the left-wing Euro-quislings among their supporters.

Mr. Newton: It is certainly well in order, if slightly out of the usual run of things, for my hon. Friend to make a helpful suggestion; but I am not in a position to add to what the Prime Minister said most recently last Tuesday, or to what was said in a number of the exchanges during Treasury questions today.

Mr. Alex Salmond (Banff and Buchan): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the vigorous debate in the European Standing Committee last Tuesday, when a number of hon. Members expressed serious concerns about the lack of direction in the Government's fisheries policy, especially in relation to Spain's integration in the common fisheries policy? Is he aware that that debate was marked by an anxiety on the part of the Fisheries Minister not to return the subject to the Floor of the House? Can he at least give us an undertaking that there will be a statement early next week on the outcome of today's Fisheries Council meeting?

Mr. Newton: In a sense, the hon. Gentleman has answered his own questions. The need for parliamentary consideration before today's Council was one of the factors rendering the debate necessary. Of course, as always, consideration will be given to the appropriateness of a statement, in the light of today's discussions.

Mr. Jacques Arnold (Gravesham): May we have a debate next week on the value for money and freedom of decision taking being enjoyed by grant-maintained schools? I am thinking of the seven out of nine secondary schools in my constituency and about 1,000 elsewhere. It is clear that these facts are not getting across enough—although the Leader of the Opposition understands them, to the benefit of his own family. But I am not so sure that these benefits are clearly understood by the Opposition in general, and it is obvious that they are not understood by Labour councillors up and down the country, who are spending council tax payers' money on opposing parents' decisions to go grant-maintained.

Mr. Newton: I share my hon. Friend's hope that the Leader of the Opposition might divert some of his time, among other things, to securing a more sensible and more responsible approach by Labour authorities to this subject.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Madam Speaker: Order. I seek the co-operation of the House. We have an important debate coming up, for which I will have to limit speeches to 10 minutes, so it will be difficult to call all hon. Members who are seeking to ask a business question if they take a long time asking that question. I shall do my best, without commitment, to call them all; but I want one brief question in each case, and a brisk reply.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): As virtually every national newspaper is stating that the Prime Minister is going to face a challenge in November to his position as party leader, may I helpfully suggest that arrangements be made for the contenders to come to the House and explain why they want the job, and their alternative policies?

Mr. Newton: It is even more unusual for the hon. Gentleman to make a helpful suggestion, and he has certainly been true to form on this occasion. I think I shall leave his suggestion on the table.

Sir Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): In view of the alarming report agreed yesterday by the Employment Committee of the European Parliament, which stated that the convergence criteria would add another 10 million people to the unemployment total on the continent—on top of the appalling 20 million who are already on it—will my right hon. Friend guarantee that Ministers comment on the report on Wednesday? Will they also think about it and explain to the House whether this is not—coming as it does before the single currency—the kind of economic disaster that some of us think it is?

Mr. Newton: I can hardly guarantee the contents of other people's speeches, but I should be surprised if my right hon. Friends did not make some reference to the report.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I pre-empt the difficulties that, in my view, will inevitably arise in the new special Committee set up to implement the Nolan proposals, by asking again whether that Committee can meet in public and deliberate in public—a question that was raised last week during and after business questions? If we are to avoid the disputes that I expect to take place, why should we not hear the arguments in public? Surely that would at least enable us to achieve a resolution.

Mr. Newton: I shall not add much to what I said last week. It is clear that no Select Committee has ever deliberated in public; that is a centuries-old practice of the House, and if this Committee decided to deliberate in public, it would constitute a change going beyond what is expected of Select Committees.

Mr. Harold Elletson (Blackpool, North): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent statement from the Foreign Office on the state of Anglo-French relations, following the French Government's decision to resume nuclear testing on the Mururoa atoll? Does he agree that that disgraceful decision, which has been roundly condemned by environmentalists and Commonwealth Governments, may seriously undermine other countries' commitment to both the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the comprehensive test ban treaty? Does he also agree that the decision underlines, once again, the utter foolishness of attempts to impose a common European foreign policy?

Mr. Newton: Obviously, we may have to take a second or two to understand the concern caused by the French decision; but we see no reason why a limited programme of tests need affect prospects for a successful negotiation of the comprehensive test ban treaty. At any rate, I can assure my hon. Friend that our policy on testing remains unchanged. We are actively working for a test ban treaty, and have said that we will not seek to test while the United States moratorium remains in force.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): May we have a debate on London soon, please?

Mr. Newton: I will think about it.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Some months ago, the Labour-controlled council of Rochester-upon-Medway sent away the enthusiasts who are trying to restore a local theatre, saying that, if they raised £50,000, the council would give them an interest-free loan of £50,000. When they returned, having raised the money, the council shilly-shallied. May we have a debate, at this early stage of the council's existence, in order to teach it how to run itself?

Mr. Newton: There appear to be a large number of matters that the Leader of the Opposition ought to be investigating in relation to Labour-led local authorities.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will we hear a statement from the Prime Minister about the G7 meeting in Canada? Canada is a very funny place for the Prime Minister to visit, in view of what happened a few short months ago, when its Conservative party lost every seat bar two. What is the Prime Minister going to Canada for—to study election meltdown?

Mr. Newton: As I said at Prime Minister's questions, my right hon. Friend has gone to Canada to demonstrate how to run an extremely successful economy.

Mr. Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford): Will my right hon. Friend find time for a proper debate to inform the public about the way in which policy is made by both Opposition and Government? I am particularly concerned about the fact that a policy that opposed grant-maintained schools in December moved towards doubt in January; by March, it seemed that the Opposition might accept a grant-maintained school system, and it now appears that they will.

Mr. Newton: I shall certainly take the matter into consideration. It is another addition to the long list of Labour "policies", in which the only policy appears to be confusion.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): Will the Leader of the House devote some Government time to the issue of the pay rise for the head of Ofgas, which is of great interest to the public? We are asked questions about it, and I think it only right for us to debate it.

Mr. Newton: I do not undertake to give time for such a debate. The Gas Bill is, of course, before Parliament at the moment. Indeed, that is part of the background to the matter, because the extra work, which will increase still further with the Government's plan to introduce more competition, is a factor in the decision.

Sir David Madel (Bedfordshire, South-West): I assume that the new Select Committee on the Nolan report will invite Lord Nolan himself to come and share his thoughts on why he reached his conclusions. On Lord Nolan's view that outside earnings from consultancies should be declared in full—my interest in the matter is properly declared in the Register of Members' Interests—would my right hon. Friend draw Lord Nolan's attention to the Data Protection Act 1984, which imposes a general duty of confidentiality between employer and employee and to the Companies Act 1985? [HON. MEMBERS: "Special pleading".] Not at all. We are all taxpayers in the House, and no different from the public. We should all be treated the same.

Mr. Newton: On the first half of my hon. Friend's question, as I told my hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Field), since the Committee has not yet met, I can hardly pre-empt the decisions that it might or might not take. On the latter point, I will, of course, draw his remarks to the attention of the Nolan Select Committee.

Mr. Mike Watson (Glasgow, Central): The Leader of the House may be aware of early-day motion 1242, which refers to the campaign being led by the *Glasgow Evening Times* on the terrible drug problems facing that city.

[*That this House congratulates the Glasgow Evening Times on its anti-drugs campaign, in particular the immediate success of the hotline enabling the public to expose the merchants of death on the city's streets; recognises that drug abuse is in large measure the result of appalling social conditions and the lack of jobs available for young people; and urges the Government to ensure that increased resources are made available to statutory and non-statutory organisations which help those affected, directly and indirectly, by drug abuse.*]

[Mr. Mike Watson]

However, he will certainly be aware of the similar problems that afflict every majority city throughout the United Kingdom. Will he do everything in his power to ensure that we have an opportunity to debate that serious matter before the summer recess?

Mr. Newton: We debated the Government's White Paper on drugs on Friday—I accept that it applies to England, but it parallels the Scottish document—and that would make it difficult to schedule another such debate before the summer recess.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): Will my right hon. Friend arrange for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence to make a statement on the publication of the air accident investigation branch report into the Chinook helicopter crash on Mull last year? Is he aware that, among the families of the people who died in that tragedy, there is widespread concern that compensation is likely to be limited to the terms of the Warsaw convention? That would not only be bad for the morale of all members of the security and intelligence services but also terribly unfair on the widows of those people, who devoted their lives to fighting terrorism.

Mr. Newton: The whole House would once again want to express its condolences to the widows and other family members of those who died, and I should like to do that in responding to my hon. Friend's question.

I should make it clear that the Ministry of Defence will be considering compensation claims in excess of the provisions of the Air Act Order 1967, which is another way of making the point that my hon. Friend raised. However, the amount of compensation is for discussion between the MOD and the next of kin or their representatives.

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): As, under Government rules, a French water company may submit a bid to provide rail services in south-west England, but, under the same rules, British Rail, the only company with the relevant experience and expertise, may not, will the Leader of the House find time next week for an urgent debate on what is clearly a deeply unpopular piece of legislation? That is highlighted by a recent national opinion poll, which showed that one in six Conservative voters will be reconsidering their votes because of that issue alone.

Mr. Newton: It seems to me that the interest of a French company in south-west trains is a demonstration of how wrong Opposition Members were to say that there would be no interest in the private sector franchises.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): May we have a debate next week on local government finance, so that the House can consider the position of Ealing's Labour council, which put up service charges for those who bought their homes—a fat lot the Labour party cares about that—by 200 or 300 per cent. at a stroke two or three weeks ago? The House should know that that is costing my constituents £300 or £400 a year in some cases, and should take action against Ealing's Labour council accordingly.

Mr. Newton: I do not know whether my hon. Friend is on your obviously long list, Madam Speaker but if he is, I hope that he may get an opportunity to make that point in today's debate.

Mr. Harry Barnes (Derbyshire, North-East): Is the Leader of the House aware of the letter from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the chair of the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights in Belfast, which says that, if a Northern Ireland Member brought forward a Bill on abortion to clarify the law or to bring it into line with the British legislation of 1967, the Government would facilitate its progress through the House? As the Government believe in a United Kingdom Parliament, is that offer open to other hon. Members? Would such facilitation be extended to me if I introduced such a measure?

Mr. Newton: I think that I had better draw that request to the attention of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Lady Olga Maitland (Sutton and Cheam): Will my right hon. Friend consider an urgent debate on grant-maintained schools? I ask because of the concern felt by parents in my constituency who have been reading reports that the Labour party is proposing to pack school governing bodies with elected councillors. That is socialism through the back door, and parents will not stand for it.

Mr. Newton: Once again, there is an urgent need for clarification of the Opposition's policy, and I hope we shall get it.

Mr. Andrew Miller (Ellesmere Port and Neston): In a written answer on 17 May, the Government announced their intention to investigate the possible privatisation or scrapping of the Data Protection Registrar's office. Since the consultation period expires tomorrow—as I understand it, the Government have invited very few views—will the Leader of the House consider a debate on the subject, and ask his colleagues in the Home Office to extend the consultation period as a matter of urgency?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. and hon. Friends in the Home Office will be answering questions next Thursday; perhaps the hon. Gentleman might like to raise the matter with them then.

Mr. Peter Luff (Worcester): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an early debate on the availability of pornographic material to children? I hope that he has had the opportunity to study the correspondence that I delivered to his office yesterday. It is correspondence that I have had with my constituent, Mr. Wilde, about the purchase by his 11-year-old daughter of a grossly obscene record which rejoices in the innocent name "(Don't Stop) Wiggle Wiggle" by the Outhere Brothers. Such filth suggests that the record industry is not policing its output effectively, and that there could be a need for further action by the Government.

Mr. Newton: I have indeed read the correspondence that my hon. Friend kindly gave me, and I fully understand his concern. He has written to my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office, and I am sure that she will reply to him.

Mr. George Mudie (Leeds, East): The Leader of the House will be aware that his reply to the hon. Member

for Hendon, South (Mr. Marshall) will be depressing for the families of the 3,000 haemophiliacs who caught hepatitis C from having contaminated blood through the national health service. Is he aware that a number of the 3,000 people affected are youngsters whose lives have been blighted? Will he use his considerable influence with the Secretary of State for Health to get a debate, or at the very least a ministerial statement, on this sensitive matter?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will know that I have good cause to be aware of the difficulties and the problems for families affected in this way, as I held the relevant ministerial post when there was a similar problem in relation to AIDS. I shall, of course, draw the hon. Gentleman's request to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health.

Mr. Gyles Brandreth (City of Chester): Will my right hon. Friend find time for an urgent debate on policing policy? It would give the House an opportunity to congratulate the deputy chief constable of Cheshire on her unique appointment as chief constable of Lancashire, which is a proper recognition of the qualities of an outstanding police officer. It would also give us the opportunity to recognise good service when it is delivered, because crime in Cheshire is falling, detection rates are rising and front-line policing in Cheshire is improving, thanks to 195 additional police officers and special constables this year.

Mr. Newton: Everyone will want to congratulate Mrs. Clare on her appointment as chief constable of Lancashire. I hope that it will not have gone unnoticed by the Labour party that it has happened without an all-women selection list.

Mr. Jim Dowd (Lewisham, West): Will the Leader of the House find time for a debate on the role and responsibilities of Ministers, so that the House might further explore the thesis advanced by the President of the Board of Trade on Tuesday: that, although Ministers can come to the House and deal with individual Members proclaiming Government policies, they seem to have no responsibility for carrying them out?

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my right hon. Friend made no such suggestion, but, if the hon. Gentleman thinks he did, I have no doubt that my right hon. Friend will consider his words.

Mr. Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley): May I join the growing clamour for a debate on grant-maintained education? A number of schools in my constituency are currently grant-maintained, and the reason is that parents wanted to dislodge themselves from local authority control. The leadership of the National Union of Teachers has changed its mind, but the Labour party is hopelessly confused. A debate would give the Labour party the opportunity to focus its attention on coming up with a policy on grant-maintained education, so that the public will know where they stand.

Mr. Newton: I would add only to what I said earlier: that I am pleased to see that, in the NUT's survey of its members who work in GM schools, an overwhelming number supported GM status and believed that it had improved those schools. I hope that that will be taken into account by local authorities and by the Labour party.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): Will my right hon. Friend facilitate a debate as soon as possible on whether there was collusion between the Labour party and the BBC following the report on 5 June, on the "Today" programme regarding Sir Richard Scott's report? Is my right hon. Friend aware that the thesis of that report was a letter that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had written to the hon. Member for Livingston (Mr. Cook)? That letter was sent on 25 May, yet the BBC did not use it until 5 June—the same day that it used the leaked report of Sir Richard Scott, which, it emerged this morning, it had had for two to three weeks.

Mr. Newton: I am sure that my hon. Friend's question will be looked at carefully, both by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for National Heritage and, no doubt, by those at the BBC.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Will my right hon. Friend consider arranging an urgent debate on the policies of social correctness and social engineering, such as that imposed by the London borough of Islington, which led to such dire effects for the children of that borough?

Mr. Newton: I very much hope there will be an opportunity before too long to explore some of those matters in local authority affairs, many of them falling exactly under the heading of political correctness.

Remploy

4.6 pm

Mr. Alistair Darling (Edinburgh, Central): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. The hon. Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) has been good enough to draw to my attention a passage in a speech that he made yesterday morning in the House on a debate on Remploy, in which he said:

"It has been suggested to me that Remploy could be transformed into an employee-owned trust. The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Darling), the Opposition spokesman on finance and City affairs, spoke at the launch of the new Employee Share Ownership Trust, so there is interest on both sides of the House in considering a possible different structure for Remploy as an employee-owned trust."—[*Official Report*, 14 June 1995; Vol. 261, c. 713.]

I had no idea that the hon. Gentleman was going to make that speech and mention me, but at no time have I ever suggested any structure for Remploy. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman approached me in the Lobby some two days ago, asking about Remploy, and I specifically referred him to my colleague on the Front Bench who has responsibility for Remploy. It is perfectly true that we are in favour of employee-owned trusts, but we have never made any comments so far as Remploy is concerned.

I am quite prepared to accept that the hon. Member for Bolton, North-East inadvertently misled himself. I did look for him before I raised this matter, but it is important that the record is put right, because these proceedings are followed outside the House.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member for Edinburgh, Central has taken time to do precisely that.

BILL PRESENTED

Environmental Claims

Mr. Alan Keen, supported by Mr. Peter Bottomley, Mr. Cynog Dafis, Mrs. Diana Maddock, Mr. David Nicholson, Mr. Alan Simpson, Mr. Matthew Taylor and Mr. Malcolm Wicks presented a Bill to prevent the making of false or unsupported environmental claims and similar claims related to animal welfare in relation to goods or services, and for purposes connected with those matters: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon 14 July, and to be printed. [Bill 134.]

Council Tax

Madam Speaker: We now come to the main motion of the day. I have had to limit speeches made by Back-Bench Members to 10 minutes.

4.8 pm

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. John Gummer): I beg to move,

That the draft Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 12th June, be approved.

It is the duty of any Government to balance genuine requirements for local services against the wider considerations of the level of public expenditure and taxation and the state of the economy as a whole. I recognise that this year's settlement is tight and that some authorities would have wished to have been able to spend more. That is perfectly understandable, but local authorities have to continue to take a rigorous approach to pay and efficiency and to make a realistic assessment of their spending priorities.

In the event, the great majority of authorities did set budgets that were within their cap. Only 10 did not. Those were South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority; Barnsley, Newcastle and Sheffield metropolitan districts; the shire counties of Devon, Gloucestershire, Shropshire and Somerset; Norwich city council; and Lincolnshire police authority.

Mr. Patrick Thompson (Norwich, North): My right hon. Friend referred to Norwich city council. Will he make it clear to my constituents that that council has had a fair deal as a result of the announcements and has increased money to spend? Will he confirm that council tax payers in my constituency are protected and will be excused from having to pay excessive bills that they would otherwise have had to pay?

Mr. Gummer: I am surprised at Norwich because it could have asked for special determination, to enable it to charge 80 per cent. of the cost of the ending of the temporary rule system. That would have saved the council more than £500,000, but it did not bother to take advantage of that. It is hard to understand how Norwich is in difficulties when it was not willing to ensure that it took the maximum opportunities. It had known for about 15 months that its present policies would end in it not being able to meet the proper requirements of the Government and council tax payers. It made that clear to my hon. Friend and officials some time ago. I shall come to the situation of Norwich in a moment.

I designated all the authorities that I have mentioned on 4 April and proposed for each of them a maximum amount or cap for its budget. The authorities then had 28 days in which to accept or challenge their caps. We listened carefully to the representations that were made by South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority and by others, and accepted at the outset that the cap implied by the capping principles would not be achievable. Therefore, we proposed a cap at the same level as that proposed by the authority as its budget requirement. South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority accepted that cap and is not included in the order.

The remaining nine authorities decided to challenge their proposed caps and suggested alternative maximum amounts. In each case they proposed as their alternative

their original budgets and submitted detailed papers setting out their case for a higher cap. My hon. Friends the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Hertfordshire, West (Mr. Jones) and the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration met delegations from all the authorities to hear their case. Before taking my decisions, I carefully considered the points of all the authorities, including those made at the meetings, and the representations made by hon. Members and other interested parties.

Much time and effort has been spent to ensure that each authority has had a full opportunity to put its case to us in an effective fashion and that we properly understood the points and figures that they put to us. In assessing the impact of our decisions, we relied, of course, very largely on the local authorities' own figures and estimates. Of course, it is bound to be true that, in presenting a case, local authorities will put those figures in the most effective way. The cases presented by the four shire counties focus primarily on their concerns about the impact on school budgets and, in the case of Gloucestershire and Shropshire, on social services.

Mr. Roger Knapman (Stroud): Is it the case that Gloucestershire county council has acknowledged that, even if it was capped at the present level, there would be no need for cuts in school budgets? If that is the case, the Liberal and Labour parties in that county have been running an absolutely disgraceful campaign using individual schools and the pupils in them as political pawns.

Mr. Gummer: In its submission to me, Gloucestershire county council clearly said that school budgets were not cut in cash terms. Therefore, if any school in Gloucestershire finds to the contrary, it must immediately get in touch with its local authority, which has made the position quite clear. It is necessary for Gloucestershire county council to explain if that is not the position. My hon. Friend will want to make that point clearly. There is no doubt that in Gloucestershire there has been a great deal of party politicking by the Liberal-Labour alliance that runs that unfortunate county.

Mr. Nigel Jones (Cheltenham): I am listening with great interest to the Secretary of State. He does not seem to have taken into account the pay award for teachers. School budgets have not been cut in cash terms, but the pay award has a significant effect on those budgets. Does he not realise that the budget that was proposed by Gloucestershire county council was a joint Liberal Democrat-Conservative proposal? The Labour party wanted to set a much higher budget. It was proposed by John Sewell, the leader of the Liberal Democrats on the council, and seconded by Richard Izett, the leader of the Conservatives on the council.

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman's point does not detract from the fact that, all around Gloucestershire, individual schools are finding that Gloucestershire county council has failed to meet its own demands. It said that there would be no cut in cash terms, but schools are finding that they are getting a cut in cash terms. That is because the council must be using the money that it said was going to schools in some other way, and it is blaming the Government for that.

Mr. Paul Marland (Gloucestershire, West): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gummer: No. I must answer the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones). On the payment of schoolteachers, the fact of the matter is that Gloucestershire county council knew perfectly well that it was necessary to restrain expenditure. It was able to have an increase in what it was spending over last year, but it has not delivered in the way in which it claimed it would be able to deliver. It has the means to find ways of spending money more efficiently and effectively. What is more, schools in Gloucestershire have significantly large balances—about £5 million, or 7 per cent., of the direct schools budget is in balances. That puts those schools in an especially favourable position.

Mr. Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (Cirencester and Tewkesbury): Is my right hon. Friend aware that Gloucestershire county council has inspired a campaign giving out all the fax numbers of Gloucestershire Members of Parliament, and that my floor is about half an inch thick with faxes from angry parents? It is a disgrace for the county council to blame Members of Parliament when it has cut individual school budgets by between 4 and 7 per cent. Will he clearly explain why Gloucestershire's appeal was not allowed, yet Somerset's appeal was?

Mr. Gummer: Gloucestershire county council had every opportunity to come and explain why it was not able to live within the same sort of restrictions within which most other counties lived. When it came to do so, I am afraid that it did not put up a convincing case. Somerset was able to show that, in the particular circumstances concerned, it would have had to cut its school budgets in cash terms, but Gloucestershire county council admitted from the beginning that it did not have to. Having admitted that it had the money to deliver a reasonable solution, Gloucestershire is now claiming something wholly different, to try to blame the Government for what is its own fault.

My hon. Friend is right: Gloucestershire is running a party political operation to excuse its own incompetence. Like everyone else, it had every opportunity to put its case. I am afraid that it failed to do so because its case was not very good.

I have therefore concluded that the cap for Somerset should be £264.920 million, an increase of £2.6 million above the original cap. In reaching that conclusion, I took into account the authority's overall financial position and the particularly severe impact that a budget cap would have had on school budgets in Somerset.

I considered carefully the cases put to me by Devon, Gloucestershire and Shropshire.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): In the context of the meetings and conversations that I have had in recent days with my right hon. Friend, he will know that people in the west country are worried that there may be a disparity of treatment between Somerset and Devon. May I remind him in particular of a letter that was sent to me by John Garnett of Exmouth community college? He believes that there has been inequality in the way in which the two counties have been treated. Will my right hon. Friend deal with that point specifically, so that people in Devon will understand just how disgracefully Devon county council has behaved?

Mr. Gummer: The fact is that Devon could increase its schools budget by 1.2 per cent.

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): How?

Mr. Gummer: It has the money to do so, largely provided by the taxpayer. Somerset would have had to cut its budget by 3.5 per cent. The difference is that Devon was in a position to spend something more than three times as much as Somerset. The difference between the two is about three times. Therefore, Somerset clearly had a much better case.

In order to cover up that difference, Devon county council has produced a series of—if I dare say it in the House—untruthful figures. For example, in order to pretend that it has been done down, instead of talking about spending per pupil, it wanted to use spending per head of the population in its figures and bring all the adults into its school population. Only in that way could it produce the figures.

When Devon came to compare administration costs, it included redundancy in the Somerset figures and left redundancy out of its own figures to show how much better it supposedly was on administration. I am afraid that a county that has to mislead its electorate shows by its own words that its case is extremely poor. Its case did not stand up under close consideration by myself and my officials when the council came to see us.

Mr. Marland: I should like to help out with Gloucestershire. My right hon. Friend is right when he says that part of the trouble in Gloucestershire is the historic overspending. That is the problem, as the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) knows full well. The council went on a spending spree when the hon. Gentleman was on the county council and ran up a deficit of more than £120 million. The third largest item on the council's budget is now debt servicing. The first item is education, the second is social services and the third is debt servicing. Historic overspending by Gloucestershire county council is the problem.

May I tell my right hon. Friend that I and other Gloucestershire Members of Parliament are sick and tired of being the whipping boys for Liberal and Labour overspending on Gloucestershire county council? Does he agree that it is time now to start looking at the possibility of raising the cap in order that the guilty men can be exposed and the blame can be laid where it truly should be—at the door of the Liberal and Labour—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse): Order. The House is aware that Madam Speaker has placed a 10-minute limit on speeches after the Front-Bench speeches. We are getting close to 10-minute interventions.

Mr. Gummer: The fact of the matter is that the Liberal-Labour hangover in Gloucestershire is a very serious worry. The Liberal party is a spendthrift party. It has a technique. It is to spend the money and then complain when there is none left and blame the Government. I agree with my hon. Friend that there is a great temptation to say that it should stew in its own juice and should have to charge the public with the sums that are the result of its misapplication of funds, its wastage and its inability to control funds when the whole of the rest of the public sector must do so. I was surprised that the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Mr. Jones) intervened. Everyone in the House knows where the fault lies in Gloucestershire. It lies in the inability of the Liberals not to spend money on anything that happens to be around and then to blame everyone else when they find that that is costly.

Mr. Nigel Jones: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Gummer: No, I will not give way. I have given way once to the hon. Gentleman. One time is enough for him. If I give way again, he might put his foot in it a second time. He is wrong in what he says. If Gloucestershire county council under Lib-Lab control, but particularly under the Liberals, had been less spendthrift in the past, it could have done better now. It must not blame the Government for its attempt to pinch money from the taxpayer generally to make up for its past spending. It is time that the people of Gloucestershire knew that rather than just hearing the carefully phrased clauses of the hon. Member for Cheltenham.

Mr. Richard Tracey (Surbiton): Although I am not involved in the affairs of Gloucestershire, it seems very clear that there is confusion, whether in Gloucestershire, Devon or, indeed, in matters relating to the London boroughs, of which I certainly have some knowledge. May I suggest that, to avoid such confusion, the Government ought to consider lifting the policy of capping? In all seriousness, the public do not understand all the complexities and those guilty men should be seen to be responsible.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend makes an important point. We shall—as always—be looking at the issue again this year. He must consider the other side of the argument. When we did not have capping, those guilty men made ordinary people's lives intolerable by increases in council tax. Although the sort of increases demanded in towns such as Harlow and boroughs such as Ealing—I declare an interest because I live in Ealing during the week—showed them to be the kind of councils that they were and they reaped electoral disbenefit afterwards, ordinary people were faced with bills that were extremely hard to pay. So there is a balance to be struck.

Mr. Mark Robinson (Somerton and Frome): I would not want to draw comparisons with other counties, but once we got under the Liberal Democrat rhetoric in Somerset, we realised that a case for the schools of Somerset needed to be heard. That is why we supported the case for the cap to be raised in Somerset. That at least shows that the appeal system works fairly and properly, that cases are considered and that some win and some are not successful.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend points to the fact that hon. Members have every right and duty to look behind the figures produced by their councils—even if they are produced by councils with which they do not agree—to see whether there is some basis for them. In the case, for example, of Somerset, there is no doubt that, despite the relaxation in the cap, Somerset is in a much less favourable position with regard to school budgets than Devon. Devon is in a better position even after the raising of the cap.

Mr. Nick Harvey (North Devon): How?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman does not know how because he does not understand the system. Like so many members of his party, he just shouts out parroted comments while not understanding what he is talking

about. The truth is—I shall put it very clearly—that Devon is able to increase its schools budget by 1.2 per cent., whereas even after the cap has been raised in Somerset, Somerset can increase its schools budget by only 0.1 per cent. Therefore, my facts are clear.

Mr. Harvey: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Gummer: I shall give way to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Steen: Is my right hon. Friend aware that most Members who represent Devon have been subject to a most vitriolic campaign involving students, young people, parents and educationists, who have been saying that because of the county cuts, hundreds of teachers will have to be laid off? Does my right hon. Friend agree that, to use a good agricultural phrase, the people of Devon have had the wool pulled over their eyes—or have Members of Parliament had the wool pulled over their eyes?

Mr. Gummer: It is about time that people in Devon recognised that, over the past two years, Devon has been able to increase its schools budget by 8 per cent. What is more, that has been possible while the county council has chosen to give greater priority to social services, the budget for which this year has risen by 3.6 per cent. That county council has chosen social services as its priority and increased that budget rather than the spending on education. It is still able to do better for education than its neighbours, yet it is blaming the Government for the fact that its competence has meant that that money has not got through to the schools concerned.

Mr. Rupert Allason (Torbay): As my right hon. Friend has made a comparison in terms of expenditure per pupil, will he make that comparison between Somerset and Devon? That would be comparing like with like, rather than comparing apples with oranges.

Mr. Gummer: I can give my hon. Friend a detailed note, which will be available to any Member of the House, showing the difference between the case put forward by Devon and the truth of that case. My hon. Friend will be able to see the details exactly compared, and I am sure that he will want to use the information widely.

Mr. Patrick McLoughlin (West Derbyshire): My right hon. Friend is right to talk about the great confusion surrounding local government expenditure. Central Government now account for about 90 per cent. of local authority expenditure, so will my right hon. Friend and his colleagues consider as a matter of urgency whether in future years a leaflet should be sent by the Secretary of State to every council tax payer explaining how much money the Government have given the person's local council, compared with the sums given to other councils? It is a nightmare trying to understand all those budgets.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. That is the end of long interventions. I shall interrupt any further long interventions and stop them, because interventions must be brief and to the point.

Mr. Gummer: I am happy to tell my hon. Friend that we are now producing performance indicators that will enable people to see easily the difference in the quality of provision between one county or district and another. The performance indicators are simple to understand, and one of the facts that emerges clearly is the incompetence of Derbyshire county council, which, as I have said in the past, is and has been for many years one of the worst councils in Britain.

Mr. Harvey: The Secretary of State says that Devon could spend more on its education budget. Will he confirm that Devon is already spending more than its standard spending assessment on education? He says that social services is one of the departments that the money might come from, but what account has he taken of the fact that Devon was the hardest-hit shire county when the funding for community care was reorganised last year? Where is the money that the right hon. Gentleman proposes should be spent on education supposed to come from?

Mr. Gummer: I have explained to the hon. Gentleman that, despite having decided to put more money into social services, Devon has still been able to increase its education budget by 8 per cent. over the past two years. If schools are not receiving the money that they hoped for, it is because Devon county council has not operated efficiently and effectively. It could deliver the money, but only if it were not run by people who do not understand how to be efficient. The hon. Gentleman does his county no good by standing up for the inefficiency of those who rule it instead of for those who ought to be getting a better service. He should intervene and press his friends who are getting it all wrong, instead of constantly trying to pass the buck.

The hon. Gentleman must realise that power demands responsibility, and it is not responsible to attack the Government for the faults of his Liberal Democrat friends. He ought to learn that fact, but he will not have long to learn it, as the Liberal Democrats will be turfed out at the next election because of the appalling way in which they have behaved. He should realise that his area is one of the places where the Conservatives will make gains at the next election, because the people have been shown what it is like to have their councils run by Liberal Democrats.

I shall now deal with the metropolitan districts of Barnsley, Newcastle and Sheffield, all of which made cases for redetermination. I have concluded that the cap for Barnsley should be £152.626 million—a relaxation of £2 million, but about £1 million less than Barnsley proposed. In reaching that conclusion, I took into account all the factors relevant to Barnsley's case, including the area's economic and social difficulties, which have been exacerbated by large-scale closures in local industries, and the special problem of education standards in the area.

I carefully considered the cases made by Newcastle and Sheffield. Sheffield was given a relaxation of £3 million in its cap last year, to give it time to adjust to a change in its circumstances. The benefit of that relaxation will be carried forward into the current year. In addition, the figures that Sheffield gave to me show that it has budgeted for significant savings in its financing costs in the current year. In consequence, the budgeting position for main services such as education and social services has eased sufficiently to enable the council to increase its expenditure compared with 1994-95.

On the figures that Newcastle has put to me, it can be seen that that council will be able to budget for modest increases in expenditure in main services such as

[Mr. Gummer]

education and social services. I have concluded that, by taking into account the overall financial situation and circumstances, it would be reasonable to confirm the original capping limits for both Sheffield and Newcastle.

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Will the Secretary of State confirm that, despite what he has said, the capping limit that he is intending to impose this year is lower in real terms than the initial cap for last year, which he decided was inadequate and later increased by £3 million?

Mr. Gummer: The hon. Gentleman did not mention to the House that Sheffield budgeted for a saving of £20 million on its financing costs, or that it will also benefit from the £13.5 million of savings that it achieved last year. Sheffield was given help last year because of its financing costs, much of which existed because of the hon. Gentleman's period in office in the city. The ordinary council tax payer in Sheffield is paying for the overspending of many years.

If the council tax payers of Sheffield want to know why their bills are so high, they must ask the hon. Gentleman and the hon. Member for Sheffield, Brightside (Mr. Blunkett). It was during their stewardship that the burden of debt was put on the shoulders of the people of Sheffield. The hon. Gentleman wants me to take the burden that he placed on the shoulders of the people of Sheffield and move it on to everybody else's shoulders. He wants the debt to be passed on to the shoulders of people who have been looked after by prudent Conservative authorities. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I will not do that.

It is time that the people of Sheffield recognised that the prudent policies of the Government have brought reductions in the financing costs. The financing costs have come down because an economy with low inflation rates, and therefore low interest rates, enables the costs of past profligacy to be less than they would otherwise be. I am sure that, given the facts, the people of Sheffield would recognise that the hon. Gentleman has only one part to play in the House—to apologise for the extent to which the local council wasted the money of the people of Sheffield in the past.

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Will the Secretary of State explain why the cap that he has set for Newcastle will not allow Newcastle to spend the money that he actually wants to give it through the SSA?

Mr. Gummer: If one looks at what Newcastle did to the council tax last year, one sees precisely that the council took from the people of Newcastle more than it should have. Am I supposed to say to the people of Newcastle that we shall protect everybody else but them in these circumstances? [HON. MEMBERS: "Yes."] Many of my hon. Friends would prefer it if we did not give protection, and if we allowed the Labour and Liberal parties to show the electorate precisely how expensive they are. That is a view which I respect. The hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne, Central (Mr. Cousins) cannot have it both ways. Under the present system, there is no doubt that our purpose is to make sure that the people of Newcastle do not pay the full penalty for having voted Labour.

Sir Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): Will my right hon. Friend pay tribute to the steps that Sheffield has now taken to get itself out of the financial mire? Those steps include a huge reduction in the number of staff. May I say that I am grateful for two things that the Government have done? The first was the help that they gave the fire and civil defence authority, and the second was the help that they gave Sheffield last year.

Mr. Gummer: My hon. Friend is perfectly right, and I pay tribute to Sheffield for what it has done. We gave Sheffield that breathing space because it has at long last—after the demise of the two hon. Gentlemen whom I mentioned—begun a management plan to face the issues of the debts that have been placed on the people of Sheffield. We gave Sheffield that help in respect of that plan and it continues this year. I am sure that that was the right thing to do.

Lincolnshire police authority was the only police authority to seek an increase in the capping limit. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department and I accept that the transition to a new cash-limited financial regime in 1995-96 has created particular difficulties for the authority. We have decided to agree to the budget proposed by the authority—a relaxation of £1.8 million. I must stress, however, that that relaxation is intended as a one-off adjustment, to enable the authority to adjust to the new financial regime and to give it the time that it needs to plan and implement the savings of about £1 million that Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary has identified as achievable through improved management efficiency.

This year, it is for Lincolnshire to do what Sheffield was asked to do last year. It must take advantage of the temporary help that has been given, to ensure that a situation that it ought to be able to put right, is put right.

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): First, may I say how exceedingly grateful everyone in Lincolnshire, including my constituents, is for the decision that my right hon. Friend has taken? We all feel, irrespective of party, that the Lincolnshire police are an extremely efficient organisation and, unlike Sheffield, there is no background history of profligacy or inefficiency. While I fully understand my right hon. Friend's argument about next year, will he also bear it in mind that, in the weeks ahead, we shall be explaining to him that the formula for deciding police authority grants is not appropriate to Lincolnshire for a variety of reasons?

Mr. Gummer: I certainly would be happy to discuss with my hon. Friend his views on the formula and I know that my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary will be happy to do the same. One needs an objective scheme to share out money in central funds if the taxpayers' interests are, in fairness, to be protected, and my hon. Friend will understand that one problem with any formula is that those who benefit tend to be quiet but not very grateful and those who find it difficult want a different formula. I shall be happy to look into the matter. Of course, it is the first year of full operation and my hon. Friend may well have some points that we shall be able to take on board.

Norwich city council was the only one of 294 districts that did not set a budget at the level implied by the capping principles. It has known for some time that its spending relied on an unsustainable rundown of reserves. It has taken some steps to moderate spending, but nevertheless could have done more to adjust its budget and avoid the necessity of late change. The council chose not to do so. I considered carefully the council's representations, but concluded that the cap that we propose is reasonable and achievable, and should be confirmed.

If the order is approved by the House, we shall serve a statutory notice on all nine authorities, formally setting their cap. With the exception of Somerset and Lincolnshire police authority, the capped authorities will have 21 days to reduce budgets in line with their cap and to set new, lower council taxes.

I conclude by reminding the House of the long period of consultation that underlies our decisions on capping. Our intentions for the capping principles were published with the rest of the draft settlement in early December and again at the time of the local government finance debate in February. At each stage, we have listened to the arguments put to us. In February, the provisional capping principles were amended to relax caps for authorities that had been affected by major reductions in standard spending assessments in the 1993 review and to allow greater increases for metropolitan fire and civil defence authorities.

In April, when we confirmed the principles and designated authorities for capping, we accepted the particular problems of South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir I. Patnick) for his thanks on that subject. We therefore set the cap at the budget that the authority proposed. We now propose relaxations for a further three authorities.

That record shows that we have taken the greatest care to implement what was certainly a tough settlement as fairly as was practicable, and that we are prepared to make adjustments when there are especially severe problems. As my right hon. and hon. Friends will no doubt have noticed, however, that means that it is important to make the distinctions, in their counties and districts, between those that have been put in a position that it is difficult for them to meet because of the nature of the system and those that wished to blame central Government for the consequences of their own actions as county councils. County councils that have failed to deliver what their electorate expected must take the responsibility. The hon. Member for Cheltenham, who is no longer in the Chamber, has been trying to press the Government to take the blame instead of the local authority that he sought to control and now does control. He ought to take his own responsibility.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth (Coventry, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This is the second time that I have raised a point of order with regard to this Secretary of State. Madam Speaker announced that it was necessary to impose a 10-minute limit on all Back-Bench Members' speeches and there are guidelines for Front-Bench spokesmen, yet we seem to have a continuing problem with the right hon. Gentleman, who has been wasting the time of the House and thus preventing other hon. Members from speaking.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There may be guidelines, but as the hon. Gentleman will be aware, it is for the Secretary of State to deliver his own speech.

Mr. Gummer: I must point out that I have taken about 18 interventions and that my speech is extremely short. I had to answer those questions and I hope that the answers will save time for many hon. Members who need to speak. I understand that some people do not want to hear the facts of what happens when local councils are run by Labour and Liberal authorities.

Authorities whose caps have not been relaxed will be disappointed. I reiterate that we have not taken the decisions lightly, but have considered all aspects of the authorities' overall situation and listened carefully to the arguments put to us. We have changed the figures for a number of authorities—authorities whose policies we might not agree with, but which have been able to put a proper case that has been clearly acceptable within the rules. We concluded that the cases that they put to us provided a sufficient base for relaxing their caps, while others provided an insufficient base.

It is a tight settlement, but the great majority of authorities have been prepared to take tough decisions to set budgets within their caps. The caps that we have proposed in the order are reasonable, appropriate and achievable in all the circumstances of each authority. They will save council tax payers in the relevant areas about £24 million in 1995-96 alone. I commend the order to the House.

4.47 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I must welcome three and a half aspects of the Secretary of State's speech. We welcome his acceptance—it was really forced on him by the Home Office, which supported the authority—that South Yorkshire fire and civil defence authority would have been endangering people if it had stuck to the cap that the Department originally envisaged. We also welcome the decision to allow Lincolnshire police authority to spend what it thinks necessary to police Lincolnshire, and I suppose that we should welcome the result of the Somerset SOS—save our seats—campaign from the local Tories.

To some extent, we should welcome the relaxation of the cap for Barnsley, but the order will mean further budget reductions of about £2 million in Norwich, £2.25 million in Newcastle, £4.5 million in Sheffield, £4 million in Gloucestershire, £4.5 million in Devon and £6 million in Shropshire. That is what the Secretary of State, not the people of those areas, has decided. In a sense it is appropriate that the Secretary of State should take those decisions, because he took the decisions that set the spending levels in the first place. The principal influence on the amount of money that a council can spend and that it must raise through council tax is the amount of grant that it gets from the Government. That amount was never adequate when it was first announced in November last year; we said that it would not match the rate of inflation, or what was likely to be the teachers' pay settlement then, and it has not done so. Consequently, councils are in trouble. It was a political racket then and it remains a political racket. It is not the product of some objective or God-given formula; it has been put together by politicians with a political purpose, the main object being to make everyone else suffer so that their friends in Westminster will be okay.

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

The capping system cannot be fair because it is the ultimate expression of a totally unfair system. The basic building block of the grants system is the Government's official indicators of need. An examination of the indicators shows that the system is rotten to the core because the Government regard Westminster as the fourth most deprived place in Britain. Nobody in his or her right mind believes that, not even the people who run Westminster city council, but as a result of it Westminster gets massive grants.

Let us compare the amount of grant per head that Westminster receives with the amount received by the capped authorities. If Norwich were to receive the same grant per head as Westminster, it would not collect any council tax this year but would give every council tax payer in Norwich a rebate of £816. In Barnsley, the rebate would be £867 per head, in Sheffield £588 and in Newcastle £293.

The same calculations could not be made for the counties because the financing is done differently, but I shall give some examples from the districts affected by the county decision. In Gloucestershire, for example, if each citizen of the city of Gloucester received the same Government help as those in Westminster, Gloucester city council could make rebates of £921 per head and the Forest of Dean council could make rebates of £685. In Devon, Plymouth city council could pay out no less than £992 per head, and Exeter city council could pay out £789 per head. In Shropshire, the Wrekin council could pay £777 per head.

It is not as though Westminster city council were the epitome of efficiency and financial prudence.

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration (Mr. David Curry): If the hon. Gentleman were reorganising the standard spending assessment system to achieve the outcome that he would like for Westminster, what would be the implication for the cuts in rate support grant for Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, Southwark and the other inner-city, Labour-controlled authorities?

Mr. Dobson: I had always assumed that the Minister was in his right mind, but if he seeks to compare Tower Hamlets and the other boroughs that he mentioned to Westminster, he has clearly taken leave of his senses—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State made an enormously long speech. If he will keep quiet, I shall get on with mine and hon. Members will be able to speak up for the communities that they represent.

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman knows that there is a connection between those authorities and Westminster city council because they are encompassed by exactly the same methods of calculation. Therefore, if the hon. Gentleman were to seek to re-engineer the SSA system to achieve the deliberate outcome of cutting grants to Westminster, the necessary consequences would be reductions in grants to Tower Hamlets, Lambeth, Southwark and the other inner-city London authorities, unless he were deliberately to rig the system.

Mr. Dobson: If the Minister wants to talk about deliberate rigging of the system, perhaps he should explain to Tory Members who voted for this settlement that Westminster city council receives a special allowance, for which virtually no one else in the country qualifies—that is why it was invented—for visitors to Westminster.

Mr. Curry: Anybody is entitled to it.

Mr. Dobson: Yes, just as anyone can eat at the Ritz. Anyone is entitled to the grant, but the grant is especially useful to Westminster.

Many visitors arrive in Westminster in cars and pay parking charges. Westminster city council receives more than £20 million a year in parking charges, which is not offset against any aspect of its grant. It is a racket, it has always been a racket and it will remain a racket so long as the Government are in office.

It is a racket that protects over-spenders in Westminster. The capped authorities spend much less on refuse collection: Newcastle spends £25 per head, Norwich spends £11 per head and Sheffield spends £14 per head. However, the Tories' over-subsidised fat-cat Westminster city council pays out no less than £53 per head on refuse collection. On street cleaning, Newcastle spends £8 per head, Norwich spends £5 per head and Sheffield spends £5 per head. Those councils have been capped so that Westminster, profligate as it is, can spend £36 per head on street cleaning. It beats me why Tory Members from Shropshire, Gloucestershire, Devon, Norwich and Sheffield are willing to go along with that racket, which lines the pockets of a few people in Westminster and does no good for the people whom they purport to represent.

I shall compare the allowance made in the grant for education for the capped authorities with that made for Westminster. If Devon county council were to receive the same education allowance as Westminster, it could employ 2,566 extra teachers this year rather than think about getting rid of teachers. Gloucestershire could employ 1,618 extra teachers, Shropshire could employ 996 extra teachers, Sheffield could employ 892 extra teachers, Newcastle could employ 371 extra teachers and Barnsley could employ 451 extra teachers. I cannot understand why Tory Members voted for a settlement like that. It must be said, however, that that is the basic background to this decision. If something is rotten to the core, the final product—the capping—is also bound to be rotten.

Mr. Tracey: I have been interested to hear the hon. Gentleman constantly talk about Westminster. As he mentioned foreign visitors, will he say how many foreign visitors go to Newcastle, Sheffield, Manchester or the outer London boroughs, one of which I represent? The House should also know the total external grant that a Labour Government would give.

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman, who does not seem to rank among the star wranglers of the play, confirms my point. There is a grant for visitors because it suits Westminster and it is no use to virtually everyone else in the country. That is why the Government conceived it in the first place.

The decisions on the capping criteria do not make sense either. When the settlement was announced, the Secretary of State chided me, saying that I was new to the job, had misunderstood the figures and had not done my

homework. I had the audacity to predict that the average increase in council tax would be 6 per cent. as a result of the settlement.

Sir Irvine Patnick: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman accuses me, as a Sheffield Tory Member, but appears not to hear when I seek to intervene.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's point of order is an abuse of the House. He is an experienced Member, not least in the Whips Office, and knows full well the procedures of the House. What he has to say is a matter for his own speech or an intervention if the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) gives way.

Mr. Dobson: As I was saying before I was so politely interrupted, the Secretary of State said that I misunderstood the figures and had not done my homework, but I predicted that the average council tax increase across the country would be 6 per cent. I freely confess that I was wrong; it was 5.2 per cent.

I plead in justification, however, that in Suffolk, Coastal, represented by the Secretary of State—I use the band D figure, because that is his favourite method—the increase was 6 per cent. It was 8.5 per cent. in Huntingdon, represented by the Prime Minister. It was 7.4 per cent. in the area represented by the Secretary of State for Education and, in the area represented by the chairman of the Conservative party, the right hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley), it was actually 15 per cent.

If we then compare—*[Interruption.]* The Secretary of State made a long speech. Let me finish my argument. If we compare the increases in those places with the increases in the places that are to be capped, what do we find? We find that, if Barnsley had had its way, it would have been 12 per cent. In Devon, there would have been no increase, allowing for the police. In Gloucester, there would have been no increase, allowing for the police. In Shropshire, it would have been 12 per cent. and in Sheffield 13 per cent.

Staggeringly, if Newcastle city council had had its way, it would have reduced its council tax by 5.6 per cent., but it gets capped. It is a fiddle and a farce. If the Secretary of State wants to confirm that, he is welcome to do so.

Mr. Gummer: Did the hon. Gentleman notice that all those constituencies held by Conservatives can attribute the increase in the council tax to the Liberal-Labour county councils under which we labour? Will he explain why, when the Labour party was in power, Westminster did significantly better by comparison than it now does. If he is saying that there is something wrong with the present system, it is surprising that Westminster fares worse under the system that was introduced with the support of his hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw).

Mr. Dobson: I am not entirely sure that my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw) was a Minister of the Crown in the most recent Labour Government. *[Interruption.]* Oh God, he was a special adviser, so it must be his fault. If we are talking about special advisers, this is the Secretary of State whose special adviser did a bunk on the night of the local elections. One can understand why.

Who does the Secretary of State believe that he represents? As I understand it, in Barnsley, Gloucestershire, Newcastle, Shropshire and Sheffield, all the parties on the council supported the budget and supported the representations asking to be allowed to go through the cap.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: The hon. Gentleman was talking about his forecasts of the increase in the council tax, and I genuinely want to know what the figure would have been for Norwich. Will he confirm that Norwich's citizens will receive a rebate as a result of the action that the Secretary of State is taking tonight?

Mr. Dobson: The hon. Gentleman will no doubt attempt to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and will tell us what horrors would have befallen the people of Norwich if the Secretary of State had not intervened.

It is not confined to members of the council. Shropshire Tory Members of Parliament, as I understand it, have made representations to the Secretary of State, saying, "Look after the old folks; look after the children in Shropshire". In Devon, one or two Members of Parliament certainly did that. They are not here, but one or two of them certainly started making public representations and then, apparently, changed their minds. The circumstances had not changed; they had simply changed their minds.

There appears to be public opposition from Tories in Gloucestershire, but I have been told by people from Gloucestershire that they have been led to believe by some of their Conservative Members of Parliament that they are making private representations, so I do not really know where we are.

Those matters were material to the local elections in all those places. The Tories had every opportunity—the right hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes could have raised the subject time and again at his press conferences—to say whether the councils should go through the cap.

What happened? The Tories lost half their seats in Barnsley; they now have one out of 66. They lost half their seats in Sheffield; they have four out of 87. They lost more than half their seats in Newcastle, where they have two out of 78, and they lost half their seats in Norwich, where they have one out of 48.

The Tories also made the issue a topic of the district elections in the counties concerned. In Devon, they lost 64 seats, in Gloucestershire they lost 20 seats and in Shropshire they lost 35 seats. Local people will express some concern that in—

Mr. Nigel Jones: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dobson: I shall in a moment.

The people of Devon will be uneasy that the hon. Members for Exeter (Sir J. Hannam), for Plymouth, Sutton (Mr. Streeter), for South Hams (Mr. Steen), for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), for Tiverton (Mrs. Browning), for Torbay (Mr. Allason) and for Torridge and Devon, West (Miss Nicholson) all voted for that rotten settlement.

People in Gloucestershire will be uneasy that the hon. Members for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Clifton-Brown), for Gloucester (Mr. French), for Stroud (Mr. Knapman) and for Gloucestershire, West (Mr. Marland) also voted for that rotten settlement.

[Mr. Dobson]

As we all know, the biggest impact of the settlement, with the exception of Norwich, is the threat to education and social services. It is having the same results throughout the country. Parents, governors and teachers are in revolt about the threat to their children's education. The Government have tried their desperate best to blame the authorities. They have failed in that effort, because people understand that it all depends on that rotten, rigged grant system.

I do not know whether the leaks came from the Education Secretary, who is trying to prove that she is friendly towards education, but shall we say that the newspapers gathered and then received a memorandum, which showed that the Education Secretary believed that the settlement was harmful to schools. She has been going round sweethearting teachers and other organisations, saying, "I am sticking up for you", but she has not done it sufficiently well to ensure that the caps are reduced.

The budget for Gloucestershire is the same as last year, and Gloucestershire is finding it necessary to abandon schemes to provide new centres for people with mental health problems in Newent in the Forest of Dean and in Gloucestershire. There are cuts because of massive cuts in the Government's community care grant. The council is getting fewer hours from 850 home care assistants who used to help people in desperate need in their homes so that they did not need any residential care. Some of those home care assistants have had their hours reduced by 50 per cent. because the county cannot afford to pay them. That, I gather, is being challenged in the courts.

Devon county council suffered the largest reduction in community care grant of any county in the country. It is being forced to contemplate redundancies in the education department, including teacher redundancies. Spending on pupils has, I understand, had to decrease by £270 per secondary pupil in the county, and the council is now confronted with a 10 per cent. increase in the pupil-teacher ratio. However much funny Tories may wish to argue, everyone knows that the lower the pupil-teacher ratio the better off children are. Counties have made substantial economies. Norwich city council has made economies of more than £8 million in one-off or recurrent reductions in expenditure and it has cut its staff by 15 per cent. in the past few years.

The Secretary of State usually rants on—he rants in a most seemly way, as you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker—about the Audit Commission report on the massive increase in white collar workers in local authorities. Sheffield has substantially cut the number of its white collar workers at a time when everyone else appears to be increasing theirs, but it has received no credit.

Shropshire has had to cut its spending by £26 million in the past four years. The cap will lead to cuts in schools, closure of old people's homes, cuts in home care, reductions in teacher jobs and reductions in books for children. The whole thing is wrong.

If the Government are trying to ensure that every local authority in the country can serve its local community in the way that it wishes and the way that it has been democratically elected to do, the settlement shows that the Government have got things wrong. If the figures are not the product of their getting things wrong, they are the product of a malign approach to the future of many people, especially children and old people, throughout the country, and the country will not forgive them.

5.8 pm

Mr. John Biffen (Shropshire, North): My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment was challenged on account of the length of his speech. I regret that, because it is all too much of a rarity now to have a ministerial speech peppered with interventions, yet that is at the heart of the practice of Parliament and the exposition of difficult and arcane topics, and there are probably few topics more arcane than local authority expenditure. It was rather refreshing to hear my right hon. Friend approach the subject with all the fervour of the Cambridge Union. Although I found that approach uplifting, I intend to be a great deal more prosaic in my own comments—

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): And more brief.

Mr. Biffen: And certainly more brief. I shall concentrate upon the fortunes of Shropshire. The county sought a budget of just more than £245 million against the Department of the Environment's preferred budget of £239 million. It is the £6 million difference that has been at the heart of the discussions and the dissent. I pay tribute to the Minister of State for his courtesy and care in consulting Shropshire Members of Parliament—I see that the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) and my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) are in their places. Although that courtesy, alas, did not culminate in justice as far as I was concerned, nonetheless, in this sad world even courtesy has its advantages.

When we move from the statistics to the reality, we are talking about what the county can provide in terms of education, fire services and care for the elderly. I shall make only two points, but I believe that they go to the heart of the general debate rather than to the argument about the formula which sustains local government financing.

First, in examining the county's provision of education, fire services and care for the elderly, we must leave aside the detailed statistical analysis and ask whether they are the consequence of prodigal, feckless or irresponsible budgeting. One may argue about the priorities of that service provision, but I do not believe that it invites any of those judgments.

Shropshire asked to be permitted to make a modest fiscal judgment in order to take account of what it believed to be its responsibility to provide core services in the county. After all, it is not seeking the £6 million from Brussels or Westminster and Whitehall; it is being sought from a council tax that is paid by the Shropshire electorate. That is the heart of the dilemma.

My hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Tracey) touched upon the question of whether the capping structure still has the legitimacy that it once possessed. We must ask whether it has become so pervasive that it has ceased to be a safeguard and has instead become a straightjacket.

That is the heart of our dilemma this afternoon. It is not about the knock-about political relationship between erring counties and Whitehall and Westminster; it is about whether the relationship between central and local

government has enough flexibility to avoid oppressive centralisation. I sometimes think that the Department of the Environment is inspired by Jacques Delors in its relationship with local authorities. There is no place in the Tory pantheon for that degree of centralist dominance and that desire for formula uniformity.

I do not know how this evening's debate will conclude, although I understand that the motion will be passed. As a consequence of the debate, I hope that hon. Members will reflect upon the fact that we cannot return to this situation year after year because it will worsen year after year. We must now begin to think of a more flexible and acceptable arrangement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. When I called the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), I failed to remind the House that Madam Speaker has placed a ten-minute limit on the speeches of Back-Bench Members for the rest of the debate.

5.13 pm

Mr. Bruce Grocott (The Wrekin): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) in the debate. I often agree with his individual arguments but that is probably the first time that I have agreed with everything that he has said. It prevents me from making several points that I would otherwise have mentioned.

Many hon. Members may be surprised that Shropshire should be so strongly opposed to this year's financial settlement. The efforts of Shropshire Members of Parliament and local councillors, who have repeatedly made all-party representations to Ministers in the past four years, has culminated in overwhelming opposition. Ministers always listen courteously to our views and—I hope that it will not be the same pattern this year—then reply that first, we should look at our budget to see if we can make any reductions or economies; and, secondly, say that we should look at our reserves.

Shropshire has certainly made real expenditure cuts in the past four years. I shall not mention them all, as I am trying to make my remarks as brief as those of the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North. There have been cuts in residential care for the elderly—including the closure of Castle Lodge in my constituency—which always cause upheaval and unhappiness.

There have been cuts in expenditure on schools. Hadley Manor school has closed. We have debates in this place where we swap figures and talk about real terms and base budgets, but the reality sinks in when one visits a building that last year was a thriving school but which is now boarded up. Part of the building has been turned into a centre for people with disabilities, and I am delighted about that. But the fact is that a school has been lost and we owe it to our constituents to try to prevent such closures.

Ministers always tell us to look at the county reserves. We have looked at them. In 1990 the reserves totalled £9.7 million and they have now decreased to £3 million—the Department of the Environment has said that that is about as low as they should go. We have made genuine attempts to deal with our problems in numerous meetings with Ministers over the years.

It is against that background that there was such an outcry this year. I have never experienced anything quite like the public response to the announcement of this year's figures. Schools decided immediately that they simply could not impose the funding cuts and governors stated that they would not do so. There was unanimous opposition to the figures from the chairman of school governors, as well as all-party opposition on the county council.

Once again, we went to see the Minister. The council leader, Sue Davis; the leader of the Liberal Democrats, John Stevens; and the leader of the Conservatives, Brian Gillow, met the Minister to explain the seriousness of the situation and why they felt obliged to challenge the cap. Therefore, we were tremendously disappointed when we discovered that the Government had decided not to respond to our representations.

Small wonder that education has been hit particularly hard. Councillor Derek Woodvine, who is the chairman of the council education committee, also made representations to the Minister. Staff numbers in one primary school in my constituency will almost certainly decrease from seven to five, while class sizes will increase to 34 pupils. The working hours of nursery assistants employed on the home school link will be cut by two and a half hours a week, secretarial help will be cut by five hours a week and special needs will be cut by nine and a half hours a week. That is the situation at only one school. No wonder there was an enormous amount of opposition to the settlement. The depth of disappointment was not surprising.

I conclude with two thoughts. First, the cuts that will result from the decision will affect all council services. I cannot understand why the Government do not realise that the opposition from Shropshire reflects genuine community feeling. It is not orchestrated and it is not unique to Shropshire; it is a genuine reflection of what people feel and the Government ignore it at their peril. We hear rumours in the media that the Secretary of State for Education may realise it only too well.

Secondly, there really should be a better way of dealing with these matters. My first experience of local government was as chairman of the finance committee on a small district council more than 20 years ago. I look back on those days as a time of benign simplicity. Each year, we knew what the grant would be and we worked out the rate we had to set on the basis of the rateable value. We did not go to and from London with delegations to see Ministers. There was a Conservative Government at the time so it was not all happiness and light, but that was how things were done. They were times of great simplicity, when we did not always think that the people in Whitehall knew best.

Next year, as well as looking at the settlement for Shropshire again, I hope that the whole system of unnecessary bureaucracy, paperwork and delegations will be reviewed, and I hope that we return to the simplicity that worked for so long.

5.21 pm

Mr. Anthony Coombs (Wyre Forest): I do not underestimate the difficulty of hon. Members representing such counties as Shropshire and I understand what my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) meant when he said that he would like the settlement to be a framework rather than a straitjacket. However, I would like to say a few words in favour of

[Mr. Anthony Coombs]

the rate-capping settlement, in the context of a tight local government settlement, but one that I believe will be manageable.

I spent 10 years in local government—possibly not as long as many right hon. and hon. Members—and I had some sympathy for the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) when he said that the way in which grant is allocated in local government has become increasingly complicated over the years. There seems to be an unnecessary shuffling back and forth from Whitehall. It is a matter of regret that some 80 per cent. of resources in local government is now provided centrally rather than locally.

Local government should be vibrant and responsive to its local communities and raise a greater proportion of its revenue from them. In principle, I am against capping where it is not absolutely necessary, as it avoids the sins of profligate local authorities. Sadly, until two years ago, my local Labour-controlled Wyre Forest district council was overspending by some £2 million, or 20 per cent. per year. The cap let the council off the hook in respect of the local population.

As the Irishman said, "If you want to get somewhere, you have to find out where you are starting from". We start from a system of local government in which 80 per cent. of funding is provided by the taxpayer; we have a budget deficit and no less than 25 per cent. of total Government spending—something in the region of £43.5 billion this year—is spent by local government. Although only 10 out of 448 local authorities were capped and four of those had adjustments made to their caps as a result of representations to the Secretary of State, we need to control central and local government spending. Capping is one way of dealing with the most profligate or potentially profligate local authorities and providing an effective deterrent to other local authorities that might otherwise be tempted to overspend.

We have to consider, however, not only the possibly justifiable complaints from right hon. and hon. Members that some local authorities have a worse deal than others, but, as the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said, the deterrent provided by capping, and the standard spending assessment system in particular, meant that the increase in local government spending was only 5.2 per cent. Although that is higher than the rate of inflation, it is a better performance than local government has produced in recent years.

We also have to bear in mind long-term trends that will lead to significant additional proportions of gross national product—in addition to the 45 per cent. now being spent—going into Government spending because of the aging population and the tendency of local government to spend money on bureaucracy that does not directly benefit the population. The Audit Commission, in paying the piper, showed that between 1987 and 1993 the number of non-manual staff in local authorities rose by some 93,000 people—enough to fill Wembley stadium—at a cost of £10 billion.

Having heard the speech by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I believe that the capping criteria have been sensitive to local needs generally, although people may disagree. The fact that he changed the formula for inner London boroughs and for police authorities is evidence of that. The fact that only six out of 448 authorities were capped and then were unable to achieve any adjustment after talks with Ministers, is evidence of a certain amount of flexibility and demonstrates that capping has not been oppressive for the majority of local authorities.

Before we fall out with the SSA system upon which the capping regime is based, we should bear in mind that the Audit Commission recently concluded that SSAs were

"A more sophisticated system for equalising needs than any overseas system . . . and an improvement over its predecessor in many respects."

In another recent study, Rita Hale of CIPFA and Tony Travers of the London School of Economics said:

"no overseas country appears to have a full grant system which goes so far in its attempt to achieve full equalisation."

I appreciate that the way in which the SSA is calculated for education and the police service is extremely complex and I do not agree with every instance of it. In the debate on the SSA, I argued on behalf of my own county that the area cost adjustment ought to be either reformed or abolished altogether and that SSA adjustments did not reflect the needs of relatively large towns with inner city problems that are situated in rural areas, such as Kidderminster, Worcester and possibly Bridgnorth and other towns in Shropshire.

As any system of allocated grant on a national basis on such a scale inevitably will have an element of sophistication and possibly even rough justice, and as independent reports suggest that it is about as fair as any in the world, it would be unfair and wrong to fall out about it and say that capping necessarily leads to injustice.

In my own county, we have a very tight settlement, particularly in education where teachers' pay has increased by 2.2 per cent. instead of 3.7 per cent. We know that it is a tight year, but we think that it is manageable. If, in the long term, the capping regime reduces local government expenditure and therefore the total demands that central Government make on the taxpayer to allow a lower tax base and a more vibrant economy, it is well worth supporting.

5.28 pm

Mr. David Rendel (Newbury): Capping must go, and capping will go. It must do so because, until it has gone, local government cannot fulfil its real purpose—the accountable provision of genuinely local services that serve local needs and are determined by local people. Capping clearly undermines the accountability of all elected councillors. I recognise that the Conservative party may not worry too much about that as they are now the least important party in local government with fewer councillors than either the Liberal Democrats or the Labour party. The Conservatives face the prospect of falling even further behind the two major parties next year.

Surely, a lack of accountability in local government should still be of great concern to Conservative Members. A lot of nonsense is talked by some hon. Members about irresponsible overspending by local authorities. Those Members seem to see it as their life's mission to denigrate their own councils, but in practice there is far more irresponsible waste of resources by central Government nowadays than there is by local government. We have only to look at Whitehall's expenditure on management consultants, for instance, to see that.

The truth is that only one county council has set a budget significantly under its capping limit, and that is Essex, controlled jointly by Liberal Democrats and Labour. The solitary Conservative-run county council, Buckinghamshire, is spending right up to its capping limit and has increased its council tax this year by more than 8 per cent.—a long way above inflation. Three quarters of all the counties and the metropolitan and London boroughs are now spending up to their capping limits. Their spending and their revenue is determined not by local councillors but by central Government.

The whole system, therefore, needs a complete overhaul—an overhaul that devolves power to local communities and starts from the premise that local people are the best judges of their needs and of what they can afford to pay.

Today, we have to take a decision as to whether we can set the ball rolling. We have to ask ourselves whether seven particular authorities have set such outrageous budgets that local people require the protection of nanny, in the form of central Government. For that is the Secretary of State's view of the purpose of capping.

On 1 February this year, the Secretary of State proclaimed:

"the capping mechanism was introduced because, in some areas, people were unable to pay the high cost of administrations".—[*Official Report*, 1 February 1995; Vol. 253, c. 1109.]

With that in mind, let us look at Devon and Gloucestershire. These authorities have set budgets which, when adjusted for the change in police authority finance, leave their council taxes at the same level in cash terms as last year. In real terms, the figures are well down. In view of the enormous burden placed on local authorities by the local government settlement, that is a formidable achievement.

So how can Devon and Gloucestershire be deemed by the Government to be acting extravagantly? Are the Government arguing that the level set last year was absurdly high—was, indeed, completely unaffordable? To argue that would mean an admission that last year the Government failed to cap those authorities at an affordable level. Since that would be the first time the Government have accepted that they made a mistake, it would seem highly unlikely that that is what they are arguing.

So are the Government arguing that what appeared at first to be affordable at the beginning of last year turned out unaffordable at the end of it? On the contrary, both counties have council tax collection rates that are much higher than average. Clearly the local people are able and willing to invest in their communities. So if this level of council tax was affordable, as it clearly was, last year, how can the same level of council tax be unaffordable this year? On the basis of the Secretary of State's own rationale for capping, there is no excuse for capping in these cases.

There is still some hope, however. Let us hear the views of Mavis, Lady Dunrossil, the Conservative spokesman in Gloucestershire who expressed her disappointment when responding to the announcement the other day that Gloucestershire's capping was to go ahead:

"I really thought Ministers had been persuaded by the justice of our case. There is still a chance of over-turning this decision if Gloucestershire's Conservative MPs will openly declare their support for us. The proposed County budget over-cap has the full support of all Gloucestershire GM and LEA schools, and involved no increase for the local taxpayers. I appeal to all Conservative MPs to support our schools".

The councils that I am talking about are not profligate, loony councils. Gloucestershire, whose budget this year had the full support of the Conservatives as well as of the Liberal Democrats, has cut the central cost of its education department by 24 per cent. over the past four years. It has made savings of £1.5 million in central administrative departments and has cut the number of staff by 23 per cent.

In Devon, support costs are 36 per cent. lower than for the average county. Over the past three years, Devon's central support staff have been cut by 8 per cent. Senior managers' numbers have been cut by 15 per cent., and this year alone chief officers will have their numbers cut by 15 per cent.

Both Devon and Gloucestershire have already slashed their reserves to just 1 per cent. of their budgets. Indeed, Devon's level of reserves in March 1994 prompted external auditors to remark that the council should

"ensure that there is no further depletion of its non-earmarked balances. In the longer term, it should be looking to rebuild these to more prudent levels".

The level of reserves today is little more than one third the amount that drew this cautionary note.

Contrast this with Buckinghamshire's increase in council tax, at twice the rate of inflation, or Huntingdonshire's increase, at twice the average for English districts. That shows how absurd it is when Conservative Members talk about profligacy merely in Liberal Democrat or Labour-run authorities.

We must examine the real cost of imposing a cap on these authorities. There are likely to be about 3,000 redundancies in the seven authorities covered by the order. I realise that many Conservative Members equate redundancies with efficiency, but even in their terms, ignoring the human cost, is it really efficient for the nation to have to pay all that extra unemployment benefit instead of keeping these people doing useful and productive jobs?

I ask Conservative Members to consider also the enormous cost of re-billing in those authorities; in Devon, it could cost more than £500,000. What kind of folly is it to impose further cuts on already tight budgets, just to spend millions of pounds on unnecessary postage? That is what the Government are doing with their capping recommendations.

We should also think about the impact on our schools, on road safety and on the provision of a whole range of vital services. We should think of the parent of a young child who requires a statement of special needs but cannot get one because there are never enough educational psychologists. We should think of the pensioner who depends on home helps and meals on wheels but who can no longer afford those crucial services even where they are still offered. We should think of the student hoping to further his education but who cannot obtain a discretionary grant because the council cannot afford one. We should think of the child who last year studied in a class of 30 but will now have to study in a class of 38 other children—a genuine example that has come to my attention.

[Mr. David Rendel]

It is time the Conservatives realised that local government services are not just some sort of luxury. Perhaps if they had grasped that fact they might not have had such a complete humiliation in the local elections last month.

Nor can the Government any longer use the argument that capping is necessary for the sake of the national economy—as some Conservative Members argued today. It is now clear that, in some cases at least, the capping regime means that local authority budgets are set higher than they need to be. Many councils feel under considerable pressure to budget right up to cap, whether the expenditure is necessary or not in a particular year, because of a fear that they will otherwise lose out next time round.

Capping can cost local authorities in other ways as well. In Devon, the county has resolved to secure as much European funding as it can—rightly so. That requires matched funding from the county. If the Devon Conservatives get their way, in order to meet their capping restriction, half the cuts will come from their European matching funds budget, thereby costing the county many hundreds of thousands of pounds in European revenue. I want to make it quite clear to all who are thinking of going into the Government Lobby tonight that they will be voting for Britain to lose out on its fair share of European funds.

Now there are strong rumours that the Government may be preparing another U-turn on capping. If there is any truth in those rumours, how can it be right to cap the seven authorities today, with all the costs that that entails, only to abolish capping next month? That is simply ludicrous. If the Government are ready to acknowledge that the system is not working, they should do so now.

Capping must go, and I urge Conservative Members to show some courage and vote against the motion. The order makes no sense. It will cost millions of pounds to implement, it subverts the whole purpose of local government, and the House should have nothing to do with it.

5.39 pm

Sir Irvine Patnick (Sheffield, Hallam): On 25 May last year, when the House debated council tax in Sheffield, I, as a Whip, was not able to take part officially. Despite that stricture, however, I was heard, and *Hansard* records my participation.

During that debate, my hon. Friend the Minister congratulated Sheffield on establishing a more secure financial base. The united pleas of Sheffield city council and others—including the Sheffield Members of Parliament—resulted in a £3 million increase in the amount originally proposed for the city. Each year, I have made representations to ensure that Sheffield is given its proper chunk of the nation's cake, crumbs and all.

I do not propose to make party-political points about why Sheffield is in its present position, or to apportion blame for its past mistakes. Many Sheffield residents, however, have taken to comparing the city with Manchester for the purposes of standard spending assessments. As the Minister knows, Manchester has more ethnic minorities, more one-parent families and more people on income support. All those factors determine standard spending assessments.

Manchester does not have the same physical characteristics as Sheffield, which makes any direct comparison impossible; but many people continue to measure Sheffield against Manchester. When I first entered local government some time ago, a rivalry existed between Sheffield and Leeds; indeed, it still exists. At that time, Sheffield compared itself with Leeds, but now that it obtains more from the Government than Leeds it has sought another city on which to base its arguments and has chosen Manchester.

The Government have responded in many positive ways, making a Minister responsible for Sheffield, approving the city's bid for a single regeneration budget and allowing credit approvals for part of the Sheffield inner ring road. Many other instances debunk the myth that the Government do not care about Sheffield. I am grateful to Ministers for meeting me on many occasions, and also for meeting an all-party delegation from Sheffield, of which I was a leading member. Ministers at the Department for Education have also listened to claims relating to Sheffield's circumstances.

However, my hon. Friend the Minister will not be surprised to learn that, on several counts, I am disappointed by the decision for Sheffield. I am sorry that its request for redetermination was not accepted. The expenditure limits contained in its SSA allowed for the cost of supertram, which greatly concerns not only Sheffield city council but Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and all the other south Yorkshire authorities.

It was always understood—at least by south Yorkshire authorities, and by me—that no financial burden would be placed on local taxpayers. Thanks to supertram, the city council's share of the passenger transport authority's levy has risen by £1.69 million: the 1995-96 figure represents an increase of 8.7 per cent. Just under £1.5 million of that relates to the city's share of the capital financing costs of supertram, which increased by 51 per cent. over the previous year. Furthermore, the effects of supertram road works have influenced the city's traffic count for SSA purposes. Against all predictions, there was a 9 per cent. reduction in traffic flow last year. Sheffield estimates a loss of just under £1 million in the city highway maintenance allowance for 1995-96; I trust that that will be rectified next year, if not this year.

Oddly, not much traffic was passing the census points selected. In fact, all the traffic had been diverted owing to the construction of the supertram route. That is nonsensical.

Difficulties were experienced during 1994-95 in achieving a renegotiation of the council's debt repayment profile with the banks. That was due to factors outside the council's control, resulting in a judgment in the Credit Suisse *v.* Allerdale district council case. The implications of the judgment have compounded the wary attitude of financial institutions towards complex financial dealings with local authorities. That originally resulted from the interest swap case involving the London borough of Hammersmith and Fulham.

Sheffield city council is near to completing new arrangements with the bank and the Housing Corporation in respect of its housing partnership funding, and believes that that will facilitate further progress in other debt rescheduling. The delay, however, prevented the council from taking advantage of comprehensive rescheduling at

an earlier date, which it had hoped to do. The rescheduling had been estimated to involve over £20 million this year alone.

Sheffield acknowledges, and is grateful for, the assistance of the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration and the district auditor in answering points raised by the banks and giving reassurance about the propriety of Sheffield's existing and proposed arrangements. The council has also identified several elements of the SSA which were omitted from the 1993 SSA review, and brought them to the Minister's attention. Those elements, which disadvantage Sheffield, are the social index, the children's social service SSA, the area cost adjustment and the treatment of capital financing.

I urge the Minister to re-examine Sheffield's pleas for reconsideration. Its request is based on the Supertram effect on the SSA, the Allerdale case and points—some of which I have outlined—that were made when the Sheffield delegation met Ministers to discuss elements of the SSA that were not reformed in the 1993 review. Action on any or all off those matters will assist Sheffield greatly.

I hope to receive a positive response that will enable Sheffield to continue the reorganisation of its financial base in line with its plans for improved efficiency and better financial management. It has shown its ability to put its affairs on to a more even footing; it now requires further consideration and assistance from the Minister. I give notice that I intend to press hard for a revision of the SSA on Supertram, further help with the rescheduling of Sheffield's debt and changes in the SSA to favour Sheffield.

5.47 pm

Mr. John Garrett (Norwich, South): The city of Norwich has been grievously treated by the capping order. The level proposed will lead to a substantial loss of services and the closure of some heavily used facilities. The city is well run, as can be attested by outside and objective studies of its management by the Audit Commission and other bodies.

Norwich has a particular problem, in that its resource base is much smaller than the population that it serves. It is a regional centre of East Anglia in regard to employment, industry, commerce, shopping, tourism, the arts and culture.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Robert B. Jones): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Garrett: I have barely started.

Mr. Jones: It is on the point that the hon. Gentleman has just made.

Mr. Garrett: How could the Minister disagree with it?

Mr. Jones: I do not disagree with it. If the hon. Gentleman is claiming that the aspects that he mentioned are important advantages for Norwich, however, how can he justify what the hon. Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Mr. Dobson) said about wanting to scrap the "day visitors" element of the SSA, which benefits Norwich for precisely the reasons that he has cited?

Mr. Garrett: The day visitors allowance does not benefit Norwich particularly. My hon. Friend was talking about Westminster. There is a small difference between tourist visitors to Westminster and visitors to Norwich. I must say that I wish I had not given way to the Minister.

The ratio between Norwich's daytime population and its resident population is higher than in any other shire district. A city of 100,000 people serves a population of 500,000 in the county. It has high levels of social deprivation and population density, and a low-income community—the 64th lowest paid in the country, including London and the metropolitan boroughs. Recent reports suggest that 30,000 people live below the poverty line in Norwich, a higher proportion than in Birmingham or Sheffield. Norwich has recently received some really hard blows with some 2,500 jobs losses having been announced this year so far. If one allows for the multiplier, 5,000 jobs will be lost as a consequence. That means that the standard of living in the city will fall rapidly.

The capping limit will require revenue expenditure cuts of £5.5 million over the financial years 1995-96 and 1996-97. This is almost one third of the net general fund revenue budget and will mean major reductions in direct services. Recurrent cuts of £5.5 million and a one-off cut of £3 million have already been made in recent years. The cuts have been made overwhelmingly from overheads and not direct services. In the same period, over 350 jobs have been lost, which is 15 per cent. of the council's employment.

By the end of 1995-96, general fund reserves will have been reduced to £1 million, which is the lowest prudent level. There are no other reserves for trading or other general fund activities. The level of further recurrent cuts to be made by 1996-97 has risen to £5.5 million. That means that over four years, cuts totalling £11 million will have been required if the current system of national financial control is to be complied with and the designated budget achieved. That scale of cuts represents over 40 per cent. of net general fund spending and 22 per cent. of gross general fund spending, excluding housing benefit payments.

The cuts will impact on virtually all services with reductions in quality and standards, the closure of facilities and the cessation of services. The scope for further cuts in overheads is limited, with the result that there will be major reductions of direct services. That will mean greatly reduced, almost non-existent, discretionary services. The council will find it extremely difficult to meet its mandatory obligations. The whole appearance, culture and life of the city will deteriorate.

It seems to me that that is an exceptionally vindictive action. It may have been taken because, for 60 years, Norwich has been controlled by a very competent Labour authority. The number of Tories on Norwich city council has been reduced to one; as she is the mayor, there is no Conservative voice whatsoever on the city council.

Two important and well-loved community centres will have to be closed. Today, a petition with 25,000 names was presented to the city council asking that those community centres be kept open. One receives 150,000 visits a year. The tourist information centre will have to be largely closed, yet we are trying to develop the tourist industry. The income from tourism is spread throughout the city, in shops, hotels and restaurants.

The fact is that capping is a rotten system that does not recognise the particular needs of the city of Norwich which, by the way, has 1,600 listed buildings to look after

[Mr. Garrett]

and the largest collection of pre-reformation churches in western Europe. All that is the result of being the capital of a region. The Government's formula does not reflect the needs of, or the demands made on, the city council. It is with great regret that I have seen that the Government will not change their mind but retribution will come at the next general election.

5.53 pm

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) used a phrase that struck a chord with me. He said that whatever view one takes about how we got here, we must try to ensure that we do not get into this position again.

I have long taken the view that a system whereby education funding is split, with one body responsible for providing the funds and the other for spending them, can never run satisfactorily. Parents will never know who is ultimately responsible for funding, whether for a major crisis such as the present one, or the standard running crisis that we have from year to year.

When parents are told that there is not enough money, they go to their county councillor, who blames the Government and perhaps the Member of Parliament. They go to their Member of Parliament, who blames the county councillor. At worst, both are probably not being wholly accurate and at best they honestly believe that the other is to blame. As long as funding is split, parents will not, ultimately, feel confident about the education system.

I have noticed with this matter more than with any other issue in the 12 or so years that I have been in the House how desperate and horrified parents have been by developments in Devon. One problem is that politicians use words to try to make a point, but in the end the words become devalued.

To talk about desperation and terror is justifiable, given the letters that I have received and what the people who come to my surgeries say. People going about their daily lives are not interested in the constant party political battle. All they want is their children's education to be funded properly. They have one opportunity and one alone to have that education funded at the proper time for their children.

People going about their own busy lives do not feel qualified to try to understand the minutiae of local government finance. They feel desperate and that, to some extent, politicians are misusing the statistics to try to hide things from them.

Perhaps I ought to declare an interest. Many Back Benchers spoke with such confidence and assurance about the figures that I have to wonder why I do not. I can only pray in aid the fact that I have been a local councillor and an Environment Minister. If I find it difficult to get on top of the figures, I can well understand that others find them difficult, too.

People in Devon may consider how the argument has been presented in Devon. The first thing that Devon county council did was to trumpet its case to the public on the basis that it had received less money this year than last. That is simply not true. When such a thing is said by people outside the House, I can describe it as what it is: a lie. I specifically do not comment on the fact that the same point was made by the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel). The fact is that Devon got more money for education, not less. It may not have been a great deal more, but even in Liberal Democrat-speak, an increase that is less than one would like does not amount to a decrease. Whatever figures one uses, that is a salient and cogent fact, but Devon county council has done everything in its power to ensure that the public do not understand it. This year, Devon county council got more for education, not less.

Devon county council next tried to say that it had been treated worse than the average. Depending on what measure is used, it has been treated at least as well as, and in some respects better than, the average. It has been caught on that as well.

Perhaps the most crucial and telling point of all that anyone, whether or not they pretend to understand the minutiae of local government finance, can understand is that in Devon, the Conservative county councillors proposed a budget that was feasible, involved no swingeing cuts in education and, in passing, would also have reduced the council tax. It was voted down by the Liberal Democrat administration.

I could understand it if the Liberals had taken the view that, although it is the party of permanent opposition, it was temporarily in control and perhaps ought to work responsibly to set its own priorities. It should have said, "We are sorry, but when push comes to shove, we prefer to cut education." That would at least have been honest.

Mr. Harvey *rose—*

Mr. Nicholls: The hon. Gentleman can repeat his untruths later. He can repeat outside the case that the Liberal councillors are making in county hall. The longer he holds me up in my speech, the less opportunity the public will have for him to repeat it.

The fact is that a budget was put forward—not an easy budget; there are no easy budgets to deal with this settlement. However, it was a budget that could have been set and would have meant in the end no cuts in education. Surely it would have been more honest if the Liberal Democrat administration had been prepared to argue the case on its merits instead of trying to mislead people about the facts.

This very day, in an intervention to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, I put a series of figures that Devon county council came up with just hours ago. What do we find? We find that those apparently authoritative figures make a comparison between Devon and Somerset and exclude redundancy costs for Devon, but include them for Somerset. When the council still could not paint the picture that it wanted to paint, I understand that it got to the stage where it decided to recount adult heads of population rather than concentrate on the children. Perhaps we shall hear more about that in the winding-up speeches. Anyone who has been a west country politician for as long as I have knows that one cannot expect very much from the malignant nonentities who are the Liberal councillors. However, it is immensely sad to see experienced professional senior council officers prepared to traduce their integrity by producing such figures.

Mr. Gummer: Is my hon. Friend aware that the figures adduced by Devon city council when it put its case to my Department were not those that it gave to Members of Parliament today? In other words, faced with people who knew the facts, Devon produced figures different from

those with which it sought to mislead Members of Parliament, who might not perhaps have had the background that would have enabled them to criticise the figures.

Mr. Nicholls: My right hon. Friend is entirely right. Not only were different sets of figures produced but, in due course and if necessary, Devon county council will produce different figures again.

The settlement has not been easy, but Devon was treated better than some counties. I hope that, in the end, parents in Devon will come to understand that, as long as we have a system under which functions are split, it is not sufficient to make the easy judgment that it must be the Government of the day who are to blame. Rightly or wrongly, for the time being we have a system under which the discharge of education obligations is shared by local and national Government. To judge by the figures, there is no doubt that the Government have played their part. Even without being able to understand every jot and tittle of the figures, one has only to consider the dishonest way in which the matter was presented in Devon to realise the truth.

6.1 pm

Mr. Jim Cousins (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): Having heard the lamentable and disgraceful speech by the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls), I begin by paying tribute to the 78 elected councillors in Newcastle, the 250 directly elected school governors in the city and the tens of thousands of people like them across the country who are prepared to take on responsibilities every day. I find it shocking that some, although not all, Conservative Members have snarled about such people or even called them, as the hon. Gentleman did, "malignant nonentities", or complain because such people have put them on the spot. In fact, such men and women are the bedrock of our democracy and have to make difficult decisions every day in the performance of the duties that they carry out on behalf of local people.

I said that I wanted to pay tribute to the 78 elected councillors in Newcastle, but I want to go a mite further and pay tribute to the former leader of the Conservative group on the city council, who lost his seat in the recent local elections thanks to his own party. He was my opponent at the previous general election, so if anyone has reason to use the type of language used by the hon. Member for Teignbridge, it might be me. However, he has behaved absolutely honourably over the issue of capping. He could not be described as a malignant nonentity; he is a man of honour and should be respected.

The situation in Newcastle is wholly perverse, and no one can understand it. The Government told the city council that its needs were such that it ought to spend £2 million more, but the capping criteria mean that, unfortunately, the council is not allowed to spend £1 million of that money. Who can understand and explain that?

The new Labour leader of the city council said that surely everyone in the city could work together to come up with a more sensible proposition. All parties on the city council, all the school governors and the local evening newspaper came up with a contract for Newcastle, which consisted of a proposal that the Government want to vote down this evening.

The proposition would have put money back into the city's expenditure specifically for education and social services and would have prevented the loss of some day care provision. It would have meant 250 to 300 people receiving the vocational training that they will not receive if, as seems likely, the order is agreed. The proposal would have put money back into the schools budget and saved more than 100 jobs, 75 of them for teachers, and provided flexibility.

The Labour leader of the city council said that he would not go to the Government simply to ask for extra money, but would set out how it would be spent. He would go to the Government only if he could say that he had the support of the people of the city and all the political parties on the city council. He worked at it and he achieved that support by working out a package of proposals that would have done all that I described and cut the council tax by £43.

It is hard to imagine that any sensible Government could possibly have turned down a package that would have allowed to be spent the money that the Government said should be spent, which would have avoided some nasty cuts and, at the same time, would have cut the council tax by £43. That is the proposal that the Government have turned down.

How can anyone of any political party explain such a decision to a primary school which has a 70 per cent. turnover of kids each year and which is faced with the loss of teachers? How can anyone explain it to a secondary school in my constituency which has just had a bad report but which is experiencing great difficulties and faces the loss of 17 teachers? How can anyone explain the Government's decision to vote down a package of proposals which would have cut the council tax, increased various aspects of the city's spending and saved jobs and which had the support of all political parties locally and the school governors?

This year, 10 or 12 councils came back to the Government for a revision of their cap. That does not mean that there were not 100 councils that wanted to do the same, but only 10 or 12 had seen the necessary anxiety expressed in their communities, which meant that they were prepared to have a go, although they knew that they would not be listened to. That is why only 10 or 12 councils went back to the Government. All but two or three of them have been turned down.

This is a bad day, not only for the city of Newcastle but for democracy as a whole. It is not only capping that has to go, but the Government, who are prepared to enforce it in this way.

6.7 pm

Mr. Christopher Gill (Ludlow): I begin by endorsing the remarks made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), who thanked my hon. Friend the Minister for his unfailing courtesy on the many occasions when Shropshire Members of Parliament have met him to make strong representations on behalf of Shropshire and the particular difficulties experienced by the county. I hope that the Minister will forgive me if I preface my remarks by striking a slightly discordant note.

In speaking against the imposition of a cap on local government expenditure in Shropshire, I remind the House that last November I declined to support a motion to send extra money to the European Union because what

[Mr. Christopher Gill]

is spent abroad cannot be spent at home. There was not then, nor is there now, a popular mandate for Euro-spending—quite the reverse—and there was no political kudos to be gained from increased spending in that direction. The popular demand, and the political price to be paid for failing to recognise it, is all here, at home, and home, as far as I am concerned, is Shropshire. Salopians, many of whom are observing these proceedings this evening, live in the same world as other citizens. We are subject to the same laws and, incidentally, the obligations that those laws impose on local authorities. We have to pay schoolteachers on the same salary scales as other local authorities and we have to pay the same taxes.

In Shropshire, incomes are below average. Economies of scale do not apply, because our county is large and sparsely populated. Those factors are not adequately reflected in the standard spending assessment formula. Our argument is with the way in which taxpayers' money has been distributed since the basis was changed in April 1990 from the former grant-related expenditure assessment to the current SSA, in such a way that, for example, Hampshire has been able to amass huge reserves—£92 million as at 1 April last year compared with Shropshire's £7 million. I do not for one minute accept that that is simply a result of good or bad housekeeping.

Adjoining Powys, for example, can levy a council tax of less than £400 on a band D, against a comparable figure of more than £600 in Shropshire. The education SSA for a primary school child in Shropshire is £1,862, and for a secondary school child it is £2,482, against corresponding figures in the London borough of Southwark of £2,947 and £4,097. The leader of that authority, incidentally, is on record as saying that it is well satisfied with this year's revenue support grant settlement.

This argument, as the hon. Member for The Wrekin (Mr. Grocott) pointed out, has raged for four years. Every year, since 1990, Shropshire's position has become progressively worse, in spite of endless meetings with Ministers—including one with my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister himself—mountains of correspondence and an enormous expenditure of time and effort. But all to no avail. I very much regret having been put in the position where, in the final analysis, all that I can now do to express the frustration and justifiable anger of my councillors and constituents is to vote against the order tonight.

I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will recognise that the fundamental problems intrinsic in the SSA formula have been accentuated by the imposition of capping, a feature of Treasury control that many of us had believed would never be applied other than to the most profligate of local authorities. The effects of capping are plain for all to see, but I shall rehearse some of them again in the hope that Ministers will now conclude that the time has come to end this erosion of local democracy and accountability.

Voters can vote for socialist councillors—of course, I regard both Labour and Liberal Democrats as being socialist—with impunity, knowing that the consequences of their actions will not result in dramatically increased council tax bills. Conservative councillors, on the other hand, have become demoralised, demotivated, and ultimately, as evidenced in recent elections, defeated. They can also, as can be seen in Shropshire, be driven into a coalition with Labour and Labour Democrats in opposition to a Tory Government.

There is only one practical way forward: capping has to be abandoned. Education and social services have to become a charge against the national taxpayer, and all other local authority expenditure has to be exclusively at the expense of the council tax payer.

I look forward to the day when my Government accept, first, the principle of subsidiarity; and, secondly, the importance of vesting responsibility, and the authority to discharge that responsibility, in the same hands—ideally, the hands of unitary authorities.

Several hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Some 30 minutes remain for Back-Benchers' speeches. Four hon. Members are hoping to catch my eye. With a little co-operation, they all might do so.

6.14 pm

Mr. Michael Clapham (Barnsley, West and Penistone): It is disappointing that the Secretary of State for the Environment did not agree the re-determination of Barnsley council's budget in full. The £2 million relaxation of the cap will be only temporary relief. Barnsley has a good case for considerably more Government assistance, and I shall set it out in few moments.

Barnsley was capped at £150.625 million. In the face of the service implications of that capping, the council set a budget of £153.719 million. The budget was based on what it considered necessary to provide the local community with the essential services that it required. The cap adjustment, therefore, is £1.1 million short of what the council considered it needed to provide basic services.

My disappointment follows the Government's failure, it seems, to accept that Barnsley metropolitan borough council has special circumstances that set it apart, and to recognise that its problems will require more spending, not less, if they are to be tackled positively. Barnsley has intractable social, economic and environmental problems, which are directly related to the Government's speedy rundown—I emphasise that it was the Government's speedy rundown—of the coal industry, and the legacy that that has left behind. The statistics that I shall quote show clearly the problems that Barnsley metropolitan borough council has to face.

Since 1985, we have lost 21,000 mining jobs. The average wage in the mining industry is roughly £20,000 per annum. At today's prices, in wages alone, Barnsley has lost about £420 million from its local economy. That does not take into consideration the knock-on effect of that, or, indeed, the rates that have been lost from British Coal properties and from associated engineering properties that have since closed.

One third of households in Barnsley have at least one person suffering from a disabling disease. Between 1981 and 1991, there was a 19 per cent. decrease in employment in the Barnsley metropolitan borough council area. Since 1979, there has been a 230 per cent. increase in crime. In 1979, Barnsley was 25 per cent. below the

average rate of crime; in 1994, it was 13 per cent. above it. I believe that that points clearly to the relationship between unemployment and crime.

The country has benefited for more than 100 years from the wealth that coal miners in Barnsley and district have released from the ground. The Government now have a duty to put something back. There is an urgent need to repair the damage that has been caused to the community by the demise of the coal mining industry and the associated engineering industry, and to rebuild the local economy. That will increase social and economic opportunities among the local population. Unfortunately, Barnsley's spending needs have never been addressed in a proper way within a proper framework. Consequently, the needs of the community have not been assessed in a properly measured way. We suffered from a low standard spending assessment and the formula has not been sophisticated or sensitive enough to pick up Barnsley's spending needs. As a result, in the period 1990-95 services were cut by £35 million in Barnsley metropolitan district area. This year there is likely to be a further cut in services of about £10 million. That will result in the loss of 270 local authority jobs. I was told today that between 20 and 30 teachers may also lose their jobs.

The problems have been compounded by the rigidity of the capping regime. The Minister will know that although Barnsley received an SSA increase in the 1994 review, it was capped at 0.5 per cent. above the SSA level. Therefore the ceiling was very low. If the revised formula of 1994 had been introduced in 1990-91, Barnsley would have had a £156 million budget this year compared with the capped budget set originally by the Secretary of State at £150.4 million.

I spoke about Barnsley's special problems. Poverty is one such problem that the local authority has to confront. I shall give three statistics to show the House the horrendous problems that the authority has to face. In the past four years there has been a 71 per cent. increase in the number of children receiving clothing grants, and a 71 per cent. increase in the number of children on free school meals. One in three households in the Barnsley metropolitan area receives council tax rebates, and one third of those who are unemployed have been unemployed for more than a year.

Under the funding system Barnsley has been hit extremely hard. That is particularly true of social services and education, and the latter service clearly illustrates the point. In the period 1990-94, the number of teachers was reduced by 3 per cent., and Barnsley has one of the highest pupil-teacher ratios in the country. Discretionary awards have all but ceased; the school music service has been deleted; the school swimming programme has been stopped; and community education has all but disappeared. There is currently a £12 million backlog of school building repairs.

Barnsley has to bear the cost of supertram and the impact of that project is another local circumstance that is causing a great deal of concern. The South Yorkshire passenger transport authority levy on Barnsley metropolitan council to fund the supertram in 1995-96 displaces £1.326 million worth of the district council's services within the capping limit. The share of that for Barnsley taxpayers is £525,000. I understand that south Yorkshire authorities were given a ministerial assurance that the supertram project would not have an impact on local taxation. Perhaps the Minister will say whether he intends to provide the assistance that he promised by way of revenue support grant.

Barnsley has had a raw deal over the past few years. Its proposed budget was unanimously agreed—I emphasise "unanimously agreed"—by all the political parties and by representatives of all sections of the community. The council has always steered a prudent line that has been acclaimed by the independent auditors. It works hard with its local partners. However, the Government need to recognise the circumstances that are peculiar to Barnsley and should meet their duty to the community by providing the funding that is necessary to stimulate the regeneration of the district.

6.24 pm

Mr. James Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): I wish to make three swift points, the first of which relates to area cost adjustment. As it is currently drawn, that adjustment leads to serious anomalies, especially when one authority gets the benefit of the ACA and an adjacent one does not. That point is strengthened when we remember that in much of local government national pay rates apply. A teacher in Oxfordshire is paid precisely the same as one in Warwickshire, yet Oxfordshire gets area cost adjustment and Warwickshire does not. The area cost adjustment should be abolished.

Secondly, the standard spending assessment is unduly complex and certainly not understood. It leads to difficulties, for example, in the fire service and education, and it undoubtedly needs major simplification. I shall confine myself to capping. We should abolish the cap. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I was a local councillor for 21 years and for all that time there was no capping. It is a recent invention that has been in place for some 11 years and the time has come for it to be scrapped. We should restore a real measure of local democracy. Its abolition would substantially enhance and increase accountability and would improve the quality of councillors. But above all, it would allow local authorities to spend much more closely in accordance with perceived local needs. That is democracy in action. If local people wish to spend more on education, on teachers, they should be able to do that.

Mr. Tracey: Does my hon. Friend accept that the cries of "Hear, hear" from Opposition Members when he spoke about lifting the cap are rather cynical? In my area the Liberal-controlled council said, "Lift the cap", and blamed everything on central Government. But when there is a rumour that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister might be about to lift the cap, it says that he wants to do so to stigmatise the local council.

Mr. Pawsey: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his powerful intervention. I want the cap to be abolished, and if it is the buck will stop with the local authority. There will be no point in Opposition Members moaning and grousing about what the Government do or do not do because the buck will stop firmly with local authorities.

I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to take part in the debate and I thank Opposition Members for giving me a little of their time. There is concern that irresponsible local authorities may go on spending sprees. That concern could be allayed by letting

[Mr. Pawsey]

them elect one third of councillors each year because there is nothing like an election to sharpen a councillor's mind. That is the answer to irresponsible local authorities.

6.27 pm

Mr. David Jamieson (Plymouth, Devonport): I did not think that I would totally agree with the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey). He could have made his speech just as easily from the Opposition Benches. Perhaps he has something in mind that he has not told us about.

The debate is unusual because the vote will have a direct and profound effect on our constituents. There is a direct link between the vote and the fortunes of our constituents and schoolchildren, and it will also affect the vulnerable and the elderly who are in local authority care. The debate is being carefully watched by people throughout the country and especially by those within the areas of authorities that are being capped. I am sure that those people will use that experience in deciding how to vote in future.

The debate raises fundamental issues about the accountability of councils. I agree with the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth who, sadly, is now leaving the Chamber, that one can vote councillors in but also vote them out. If people like the high services and want to spend more money, let them carry on voting those councils in. If they do not like that, let them vote them out.

I shall contain my brief comments to matters that concern Devon and Somerset, two counties that have so much in common but that have been treated so unevenly by the Government. What is at issue is simple: do we accept Devon's figure, which is £4.4 million above what the Government say it should spend on its local services? Despite the attempts by Conservative Members—I am sad to see that no Conservative Members representing Devon are in the Chamber—to obscure so many of the issues, they are simple.

Taking our education budget for 1995-96 and including the teachers' pay award, inflation and increased pupil numbers, Devon would require another £9 million for a budget that, in real terms, would stay still; it is as simple as that. In 1994-95, Devon spent above its standard spending assessment; now it is told to spend at its SSA. We note in particular that the Secretary of State for Education said that this year's settlement was tough. The leaked memorandum, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) referred, and which came out earlier this year, admitted that there would be profound cuts to children's education if capping went ahead.

After meticulous scrutiny of its budget, Devon county council found total cuts of £28 million and set the budget at £596.5 million. All it wants to do is put £4.4 million of that back into its budget. It wants to put back some of the £9 million that it needs to stand still in education terms.

This year, £3.8 million is needed just for the extra pupil numbers and £5.2 million is needed for the teachers' pay rise. As has been pointed out, this year Devon lost £8.6 million of its community grant from the Government for statutory services which is it is obliged by them to provide. As the hon. Member for Newbury (Mr. Rendel) said, Devon has just under 1 per cent. of its spending in reserves and in December 1994 it was told by the auditor that that position should be remedied.

Devon is an efficient authority. Those are not my words; they are the words of the auditors for several years running. Where will the cuts fall? Some Conservative Members have said that we can find some savings in administration. Only 3 per cent. of Devon's education budget is being used for administration. In Somerset, the figure is nearly twice that. Devon is one of the lowest spending authorities in the country in terms of administration—it lies 97th out of 109 local authorities. This year's budget will reduce further the 3 per cent. of money spent on administration in the schools budget. Cuts must therefore inevitably fall on schools. That will mean larger classes and a reduction in the number of teachers. We already know that 150 teachers will be made redundant and a further 200 may have to go.

In addition, making teachers redundant sucks more money out of the education budget just to pay redundancy money. Teachers are not standing in front of classes teaching children so that they can be idle. It is a sort of educational set-aside.

The cuts know no friends. I have had communication with a local grant-maintained school—the only one in my constituency. It too is suffering a cut in its budget of £64,000 this year. I have received, as I am sure many other hon. Members have, hundreds of letters, many of them from schools, governors, parents and the pupils and students themselves. One letter that I read, which was addressed to another hon. Member, was sent by the Cathedral school of St. Mary in Plymouth. The head teacher, Mrs. Susan Walsh, says that her small primary school is losing £17,000 this year. She is having to cut a catalogue of things. Her own deputy head teacher, who is aged just 51, is being forced into voluntary retirement early this year. The head is having to teach a full timetable so that she can keep class numbers below 39. She ends her letter by saying:

"Surely a caring listening government will put the welfare of schools as their first priority".

I agree with that and any Government who cared would do just that.

Why is Devon being capped and why is Somerset being allowed to go above the cap? Many similarities exist between the counties but there are also many differences. The case put by Devon was the most convincing and deserving that could have been put. My hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras said that, if Devon had been treated in the same way as Westminster council in relation to the SSA, it would be employing another 2,566 teachers this year, not sacking them.

Why has there been a difference? The reason is not in the factual evidence before us, so it must be a straightforward plain political decision. There is an essential difference and I know what it is. The reason for the difference is that Somerset Members, in presenting their arguments, lobbied and campaigned in a sensible, cross-party manner to get the cap raised.

I congratulate the Conservative Members from Somerset on working on a cross-party basis for the benefit of local people. In particular, I congratulate the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on his tireless campaign and I hope that he will join us in the Lobby tonight so that he can replicate the success in Somerset in Devon. The expenditure cap did not fit in either Devon or

Somerset. The difference is that the Somerset Tories were not prepared to wear it and in Devon the Tory Members saw the cap and put it on.

What about cross-party co-operation in Devon? The offer was there—the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) is back with us. Tory councillors had the offer of joining the process of setting the budget, but they came into the budget meeting at the very last minute with what I can describe only as a back-of-an-envelope calculation, saying that the council could cut £1 million here, £1 million there and £2 million elsewhere.

Mr. Nicholls: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Jamieson: I am not giving way to the hon. Gentleman. He has spoken already and we have just a few minutes. He said that money should be cut from highways, from social services and from the matching European money. If the money had been cut from the 5a and 5h funds, we would have lost a further £1 million from European funding. A cross-party delegation had a meeting with the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. The hon. Member for North Devon (Mr. Tyler) was there, so were Liberal Democrat and Labour councillors, but no Tory councillors or Tory Members were present.

Mr. Nicholls *rose—*

Mr. Jamieson: Had the hon. Member for Teignbridge been there, he would have heard powerful arguments put by Geoff Rees of the Devon Association of Secondary Heads and Eric Howard of the Devon Association of Primary Teachers as to why the cap needed to be raised this year.

Mr. Nicholls *rose—*

Mr. Jamieson: What has been the response of the Tory Members and the hon. Member for Teignbridge, who is trying to intervene? It has been a catalogue of confusion, contradiction and misinformation, surpassed only by the Secretary of State for the Environment this evening.

In a debate earlier this year and earlier today, the hon. Member for Teignbridge said that Devon had taken on another 718 staff this year. He omitted to say, however, that most of that staff were taken on by schools because they had extra numbers to fill. Many of them were taken on to meet the statutory obligations that Devon has for care in the community. That is where the extra people came from.

Tonight the matter is in the hands of Tory Members. Their vote could overthrow the cuts. A vote in the Lobby tonight could affect every budget in every school in the constituencies. Tory Members in Devon have been speaking in their own region in one way—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Janet Fookes): Order. I am sorry but the hon. Gentleman has had his time.

6.30 pm

Mr. Clive Betts (Sheffield, Attercliffe): Last year in this Chamber, Sheffield was the only authority on which an order was placed and the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Generation was at least partially helpful in raising the cap by £3 million. This year the city has had a lower cap set in real terms than last year and the Government have given us no leeway. When I challenged the Secretary of State for the Environment earlier, all he could say was that that was due to problems of financing, which were Sheffield's own problem and which were caused by the high cost of borrowing in the past. He knows, however, that for the building of our facilities in Sheffield, which are used by hundreds of thousands of people annually, we had a good financial deal in place and that was undermined by the Allerdale judgment—a court case that was in no way related to the local authority.

Last year, we explained that position to Ministers and they accepted that the authority needed time until the court case was resolved to refinance those facilities. They therefore lifted the capping limit. I went to a meeting with the Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration along with colleagues from Sheffield city council a few weeks ago. The city treasurer explained to the Minister that as a result of the court case, he could not guarantee that the money from refinancing would be available for the authority to spend this year.

For the Secretary of State to say that the city would have £20 million extra this year, so it did not need to have its capping limit raised, was simply not correct. It is not what the city treasurer advised Ministers. It is not the case. For the Secretary of State to base a judgment on that fallacious information was extremely unfortunate. I hope that the Minister will correct it in his reply to the debate.

Sheffield is a low-spending authority. We have a standard spending assessment which is lower than the metropolitan average. We have expenditure of £747 per head. That is lower than the expenditure in cities of a similar size. We have a record of extremely good management in local government. That is the judgment of other people in local government, which I prefer to accept rather than that of Ministers.

In the early 1990s, in a poll of people in local government Sheffield came out as one of the best managed authorities. We have always had good reports from the district auditor. We invented and used cash limits before the Government had thought about them. We entered into partnership schemes with the private sector when Ministers were advising the private sector not to enter into them. We have always concentrated our expenditure on front-line services. That is why this year the council has done its best to protect education and social services. That protection will not be possible to sustain if the capping limit is not raised.

In the report "Paying the Piper" published by the Audit Commission, Sheffield came out second of all local authorities for the reductions that it had made in bureaucracy, administration and overheads, not merely in the past couple of years but since the mid-1980s. Indeed, since 1987 the city has cut 7,500 jobs. Some of those savings were beneficial in the sense that they brought about reductions in the costs of refuse collection. Yet we still have an excellent service. The cuts could be supported. I was not proud to be involved in other savings because they reduced local services to local people, contrary to the wishes of local electors expressed in local elections.

Sheffield has particular problems. The hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Sir I. Patnick) rightly referred to the cost of the supertram, which will also affect Barnsley, as my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley, West and Penistone (Mr. Clapham) has explained. The funding of

[Mr. Clive Betts]

the supertram is absolute nonsense. The supertram is funded by central Government. The more that the Government spend, the less the council can spend on education and the lower the council tax is. That is crazy. I have to explain to people that their council tax goes down because of the funding of the tram that they can see running down the streets. That is a stupidity which even Ministers would find hard to explain to the electorate of Sheffield. I have certainly tried and failed. People look at me in blank amazement when I attempt to explain.

Let us take Sheffield's SSA for highways. When the streets were being dug up for the supertram, the Government left the monitors which count traffic flow in the same position. Of course, the monitors could not count any traffic because there was not any. That has cost the city council £800,000 in grant this year. That is a stupidity and Ministers know it. I have written to them three times and they have refused to do anything about it. They should be ashamed of a system which enables that to happen.

It is equally stupid that we are here today in the Chamber arguing about traffic counting and the detail of the financing of the supertram in Sheffield. It is nonsense that in a debate of less than three hours hon. Members will second-guess the views of hundreds of elected local councils throughout the country and the thousands of electors who went out to vote for them and substitute their views for local people's views.

I agree with the comments that were made by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) at the beginning of the debate. The capping orders are a nonsense. They fundamentally undermine the democratic systems of Britain; they undermine local democracy; they bring into question the validity of local elections; they discourage people of quality and ability from standing for local government and remaining in it. That is something we try to avoid.

We are not debating capping only of the authorities in the capping orders. Everyone knows that the majority of other councils have set their budget within 1 per cent. of the capping limit that they have been given. It is effectively blanket capping of every local authority that we are debating.

Conservative Members said that the Audit Commission had examined the SSA system and given it a clean bill of health. That was not correct. The Audit Commission expressed many doubts about the SSA system. It said firmly that the system was for distributing grant between authorities, not for restricting expenditure and imposing caps. The Audit Commission has been clear in its opposition to the use of the SSA system in that way.

Nor are we talking about central Government expenditure tonight. The cap does not reduce central Government expenditure. All that it does is prevent the people of Sheffield, Barnsley, Newcastle, Norwich, Shropshire, Devon and all the other authorities from saying that they want to spend a little more of their council tax on local services, which are of benefit to them. For those reasons, I feel resentful this evening that Members of Parliament who do not live in my city and do not represent it will vote to impose the order and impose cuts on my constituents and the people of my city, who will have to suffer those cuts even though they did not vote for them and do not want them. That is undemocratic. It is time that we got rid of this unjust and unfair system once and for all.

6.45 pm

Mr. Eric Illsley (Barnsley, Central): This has been a pitifully short debate, given the importance of the order to local government and in particular to those who will lose their job as a result of the vote. The debate has served to highlight yet again the Government's absolute control over local authority spending and their denial of local accountability and democracy. That denial of local accountability was brought into sharp focus on 5 May when the Conservative party was overwhelmingly rejected in the local elections. Yet the Government still come here today with a capping order which is against the wishes of both the electorate and a majority of the Members of Parliament who have spoken this evening.

The Government have no effective mandate for local government. Their policies have been rejected by an electorate who are sick and tired of cut after cut in local services and who are incensed at the cuts which are being imposed on education and social services, with the consequent sackings of teachers, increases in class sizes and closures of day centres and social services facilities. The Secretary of State has no support anywhere for his capping proposals, which are discredited, undemocratic and unacceptable.

The capping powers have been debated on several occasions. As I have been allowed only seven minutes to reply to the debate, I do not intend to rehearse the arguments today. I maintain that the capping powers are discredited and ridiculed. They create unaccountability time and time again. The Government have refused to allow democratically elected councils to put their budgets to the electorate. It is time that the Government lived up to the press speculation and announced the abolition of capping, which has been flagged up. As we know from the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey), the aim of that might be to allow local authorities to increase their spending so that Conservative Members can say, "We told you so." The Government know that the reverse is the case. Most of the authorities that we are debating this evening are responsible, prudent authorities which have set responsible budgets.

Capping has increased the centralised control of local government finance. Now, 80 per cent. of local government funding is controlled by central Government. We have universal capping. We are debating only seven authorities this evening because most of the other authorities spent to the level of their cap. Most authorities now regard the capping level as the level to which they should spend.

The capping proposals are unfair. They are based on SSAs. I have spoken many times in the House on SSAs. They are a distortion of the needs of any local authority. The indicators are approximate. They are based on out-of-date information. They are discredited. They simply do not reflect need.

Last year, Barnsley was given a 7 per cent. increase in SSA, but then held at a spending level by capping. Even today, its capping level is only 0.5 per cent. above its SSA. The same problem applies to Newcastle. Its SSA gave it an extra £19 million of spending last year. It can spend only about £11 million of that. That is ridiculous.

The financial settlement this year has been extremely harsh. Local authorities were capped at 0.5 per cent. above their 1994-95 base budget. We can compare that to previous years. Hon. Members have referred to capping proposals of 12.5 per cent. above the SSA. There is a significant difference now in that SSAs and the capping regime are being used simply to cut services from local government.

Hon. Members from all parties have raised issues in relation to their own local authorities. I would like to emphasise one or two of the points that have been made and to make particular reference to the problems of the Supertram system, which affects Barnsley, my local authority, and Sheffield. Supertram displaces £1.3 million worth of Barnsley council services for a tram system which operates 20 miles away. How can that be fair? Barnsley has used up all its balances so it has reassessed its insurance cover and taken £700,000 from its insurance premiums to fund this year's settlement. The problems are not going to go away. Supertram will be there next year, as will the £10 million funding charges. Problems will recur and next year Barnsley will not be able to use balances or re-determine its insurance.

Hon. Members who represent Gloucestershire have referred to problems experienced by their council. We have heard, however, that the council tax could have been set at the same level as last year if the Gloucestershire budget had been approved. We have heard that Gloucestershire will be subject to a judicial review as a consequence of the cuts that it has had to make in funding for community care. Again, Gloucestershire, like Barnsley and Sheffield, has been required to make millions of pounds worth of cuts in previous years. For this year, Gloucestershire has had to made budget reductions of £22 million, yet the demand for community care has increased by 40 per cent.—all at a time when the authority is being referred to the courts.

In Newcastle, education and social services will be affected. Yet, under the budget which was proposed by the Newcastle authority, the council tax could have been reduced by £43. There will be cuts in the number of teachers employed by Newcastle. The library service will be affected and there will be cuts in the youth service and the money available for special educational needs.

Why has Devon been capped as opposed to Somerset—because Somerset had a better case than Devon in the Minister's office? Is that a consequence of all-party support? Should Conservative Members who represent Devon have accompanied Labour Members who represent Devon to have achieved a relaxation of their capping criteria? Is that why Somerset was preferred to Devon? The implications for Devon were well set out by my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Mr. Jamieson). He referred to problems in education, teachers' jobs and increased class sizes. He pointed out that administration costs in Devon were quite low. Devon has been treated unfairly.

The points made about Shropshire by the right hon. Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen) were relevant. It has had £6 million cut from its budget. Sheffield has problems because of the funding of Supertram and faces an absolutely ludicrous traffic situation. My hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Garrett) made the point that a large day-time population causes particular problems for that authority.

I have made quite a rushed speech, but the main point, which, if anything, the Government should take on board, is that capping must be abolished.

6.53 pm

The Minister for Local Government, Housing and Urban Regeneration (Mr. David Curry): Obviously, in such a short time, I cannot answer the detailed points raised in the debate, but I wish to answer some of the fundamental questions that have been asked. I shall start with the point that the hon. Member for Barnsley, Central (Mr. Illsley) has just made, which was also raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North (Mr. Biffen), by my hon. Friends the Members for Ludlow (Mr. Gill) and for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) and by many other hon. Members: capping.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Shropshire, North said that it was at the heart of the debate, and he was right. We must be careful that we do not have that debate in too simplistic terms. There is sometimes a danger that the solution is seen as being a simple option. There is quite clearly an issue of the relationship between central and local government and the requirement of local decision-making; what one might call subsidiarity in its broader sense. My right hon. Friend mentioned Mr. Delors. If I may go a little further back, he would have been a Girondin rather than a Jacobin and I have no particular desire to play the Robespierre.

There is also a second question—

Mr. Dobson: He was decapitated. He was guillotined. *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Curry: The hon. Gentleman forgets what he did before all that happened. That is what counts in politics, is it not? There is a second issue which we must address [HON. MEMBERS: "He was capped."] No, that was de-capping, I believe. We must address a second issue seriously.

Any Government will always want to have in mind the economic consequences of expenditure which constitutes 25 per cent. of all public expenditure. It is quite legitimate to say, "Well, that does not matter. We can leave that entirely to local determination." If people want to say that, at least it is honest and reasonable, but I wonder whether Governments of any hue would not wish to have some mechanism by which, when economic circumstances required a particular form of management, they were able to bring that expenditure within their view. The argument must take place and we must be sure, when we have that argument, that we are confident that we want local decisions to take place.

Let me talk about a slightly perverse point. Opposition Members said that perhaps we could make local democracy function more effectively by introducing elections by thirds. Local government already has the ability to seek elections by thirds. The choice is with it. Do we, as part of a campaign to hand more responsibility to local government, impose on local government a particular mechanism of elections? There is a certain conundrum at the heart of that, which must be addressed. There is no point in doing something which is illiberal and, dirigiste, in the interests of a system that we regard as moving towards something which is more liberal.

[Mr. Curry]

I have addressed that issue because it is at the heart of the debate. There is another issue at the heart of the debate—

Mr. Rendel *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Curry: It is no good the hon. Gentleman shaking his head. It is at the heart of the debate.

If local authorities say, "The present situation is unacceptable because we are capped and cannot raise our money locally," they must be confident that if the circumstances change and they can raise what they need locally—we can argue about the way in which local consent could be obtained for that—they do not immediately start using the Government as an alibi and say, "Of course, all this is happening not because it is what we positively want but because we have not been getting enough grant." There is no point in pretending. Those issues will arise, and there should be a mature and reflective debate on the whole subject.

Of course the area cost adjustment is a difficult issue, but it is not good enough simply to say, "Abolish it." There are differentials in the total cost of employing people, which have to be addressed across the spectrum of local government. The simple abolition of the adjustment would lead to utterly unmanageable changes in grant allocation throughout the system, not least in many of the local authorities run by the Opposition parties.

I believe that the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) is being shortsighted and foolish in his constant derogatory commentary about the methods of distribution of Government grant. Whether he likes it or not, the method that delivers grant to Westminster is identical with that which delivers grant to many other local authorities, including Tower Hamlets and Hackney, which get more per capita than Westminster.

If the hon. Gentleman seeks to re-engineer that system specifically to do Westminster down, he will find himself in treacherous waters, defending to his leaders the consequences of the changes for some inner-city authorities. If he wants to take the charges for on-street parking away from Westminster, will he take from Bristol, Coventry and Plymouth the substantial revenues from their investments in city-centre property? There may be an argument for doing that, but he must be consistent and explain how he would do it. That, too, is at the heart of the debate.

Shropshire's standard spending assessment is £573 per head, and I must tell my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow that 20 counties have lower SSAs, including Hampshire, Surrey, Oxfordshire, East Sussex and West Sussex, all of which receive the area cost adjustment. So there is a complexity in the system, and one must be careful not to make too rapid a judgment on it.

I recall that we had the same passage of arms with the hon. Member for Sheffield, Attercliffe (Mr. Betts) last year, and I must tell him that the figure of £20 million that we specified for refinancing is in the budget because Sheffield told us that it was sufficiently likely for the arrangement to be incorporated in its budget. We had to operate on the budget that Sheffield put before us.

The settlement is tough; we do not deny that. I hope that, in this rapid winding-up, I have acknowledged that it raises fundamental issues. The debate on it must take place, but I appeal to the House to recognise that the settlement cannot be debated in simplistic terms, and that wider issues connected with the management of the economy, as well as with local democracy, are involved. If we address those, we shall do a service to our electors.

It being Seven o'clock, the Deputy Speker put the Question, pursuant to Order [9 June].

The House divided: Ayes 270, Noes 242.

Division No. 164] **[7.00 pm**

AYES

Ainsworth, Peter (East Surrey)
Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Allason, Rt Hon Michael (Selby)
Allason, Rupert (Torby)
Amess, David
Arbuthnot, James
Arnold, Jacques (Gravesham)
Arnold, Sir Thomas (Hazel Grv)
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert
Atkinson, David (Bour'mouth E)
Atkinson, Peter (Hexham)
Baker, Nicholas (North Dorset)
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Matthew (Southport)
Bates, Michael
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Booth, Hartley
Boswell, Tim
Bottomley, Peter (Eltham)
Bottomley, Rt Hon Virginia
Bowden, Sir Andrew
Bowis, John
Boyson, Rt Hon Sir Rhodes
Brandreth, Gyles
Bright, Sir Graham
Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Brown, M (Brigg & Cl'thorpes)
Browning, Mrs Angela
Bruce, Ian (Dorset)
Budgen, Nicholas
Burns, Simon
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John (Luton North)
Carlisle, Sir Kenneth (Lincoln)
Carrington, Matthew
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Churchill, Mr
Clappison, James
Clark, Dr Michael (Rochford)
Clifton-Brown, Geoffrey
Coe, Sebastian
Colvin, Michael
Congdon, David
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Anthony (Wyre For'st)
Coombs, Simon (Swindon)
Cope, Rt Hon Sir John
Cormack, Sir Patrick
Cran, James
Currie, Mrs Edwina (S D'by'shire)
Curry, David (Skipton & Ripon)
Davies, Quentin (Stamford)
Davis, David (Boothferry)
Day, Stephen
Deva, Nirj Joseph
Devlin, Tim
Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Dover, Den
Duncan, Alan
Duncan-Smith, Iain
Dunn, Bob
Durant, Sir Anthony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Rt Hon Tim
Elletson, Harold
Evans, David (Welwyn Hatfield)
Evans, Jonathan (Brecon)
Evans, Nigel (Ribble Valley)
Evans, Roger (Monmouth)
Evennett, David
Faber, David
Fabricant, Michael
Fenner, Dame Peggy
Field, Barry (Isle of Wight)
Fishburn, Dudley
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael (Stirling)
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Fox, Dr Liam (Woodspring)
Fox, Sir Marcus (Shipley)
Freeman, Rt Hon Roger
French, Douglas
Gallie, Phil
Gardiner, Sir George
Garnier, Edward
Gillan, Cheryl
Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair
Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Gorst, Sir John
Grant, Sir A (SW Cambs)
Greenway, Harry (Ealing N)
Greenway, John (Ryedale)
Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn
Hague, William
Hamilton, Rt Hon Sir Archibald
Hamilton, Neil (Tatton)
Hanley, Rt Hon Jeremy
Hargreaves, Andrew
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, Nick
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, Jerry
Heald, Oliver
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hendry, Charles
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas (G'tham)
Horam, John
Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter

Howard, Rt Hon Michael
Howarth, Alan (Strat'rd-on-A)
Howell, Sir Ralph (N Norfolk)
Hughes, Robert G (Harrow W)
Hunt, Rt Hon David (Wirral W)
Hunt, Sir John (Ravensbourne)
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert (Wantage)
Jenkin, Bernard
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym (Cardiff N)
Jones, Robert B (W Hertfdshr)
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knapman, Roger
Knight, Mrs Angela (Erewash)
Knight, Greg (Derby N)
Knight, Dame Jill (Bir'm E'st'n)
Knox, Sir David
Kynoch, George (Kincardine)
Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Lamont, Rt Hon Norman
Lang, Rt Hon Ian
Lawrence, Sir Ivan
Legg, Barry
Leigh, Edward
Lennox-Boyd, Sir Mark
Lidington, David
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Rt Hon Peter
Lord, Michael
Luff, Peter
Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew
Maclean, David
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, Sir Patrick
Madel, Sir David
Maitland, Lady Olga
Malone, Gerald
Mans, Keith
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Tony
Marshall, John (Hendon S)
Marshall, Sir Michael (Arundel)
Martin, David (Portsmouth S)
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Rt Hon Dr Brian
Mellor, Rt Hon David
Merchant, Piers
Mitchell, Andrew (Gedling)
Mitchell, Sir David (NW Hants)
Moate, Sir Roger
Needham, Rt Hon Richard
Neubert, Sir Michael
Newton, Rt Hon Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Nicholson, David (Taunton)
Nicholson, Emma (Devon West)
Norman, Steve
Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Richard
Patnick, Sir Irvine
Patten, Rt Hon John
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pickles, Eric
Porter, Barry (Wirral S)
Powell, William (Corby)
Rathbone, Tim
Redwood, Rt Hon John
Renton, Rt Hon Tim
Richards, Rod
Riddick, Graham
Robathan, Andrew
Roberts, Rt Hon Sir Wyn
Robertson, Raymond (Ab'd'n S)
Robinson, Mark (Somerton)
Roe, Mrs Marion (Broxbourne)
Rowe, Andrew (Mid Kent)
Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Ryder, Rt Hon Richard
Sackville, Tom
Sainsbury, Rt Hon Sir Timothy
Scott, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas
Shaw, David (Dover)
Shaw, Sir Giles (Pudsey)
Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian
Shepherd, Richard (Aldridge)
Sims, Roger
Smith, Sir Dudley (Warwick)
Smith, Tim (Beaconsfield)
Soames, Nicholas
Spencer, Sir Derek
Spicer, Sir James (W Dorset)
Spicer, Michael (S Worcs)
Spink, Dr Robert
Spring, Richard
Sproat, Iain
Squire, Robin (Hornchurch)
Steen, Anthony
Stephen, Michael
Stern, Michael
Streeter, Gary
Sumberg, David
Sweeney, Walter
Sykes, John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John M (Solihull)
Taylor, Sir Teddy (Southend, E)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomason, Roy
Thompson, Sir Donald (C'er V)
Thompson, Patrick (Norwich N)
Thornton, Sir Malcolm
Townend, John (Bridlington)
Townsend, Cyril D (Bexl'yh'th)
Tracey, Richard
Tredinnick, David
Trend, Michael
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waldegrave, Rt Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Bill (N Tayside)
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, Charles (Bexhill)
Waterson, Nigel
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen
Whitney, Ray
Widdecombe, Ann
Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Willetts, David
Wilshire, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann (Congleton)
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Rt Hon Sir George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Sydney Chapman and Mr. Timothy Kirkhope.

NOES

Abbott, Ms Diane
Adams, Mrs Irene
Ainger, Nick
Allen, Graham
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald (Swansea E)
Anderson, Ms Janet (Ros'dale)
Armstrong, Hilary
Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Banks, Tony (Newham NW)
Barnes, Harry
Battle, John
Bayley, Hugh
Beith, Rt Hon A J
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, Andrew F
Benton, Joe
Bermingham, Gerald
Berry, Roger
Betts, Clive
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Blunkett, David
Bradley, Keith
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon (Dunfermline E)
Brown, N (N'c'tle upon Tyne E)
Burden,Richard
Cabom, Richard
Callaghan, Jim
Campbell, Mrs Anne (C'bridge)
Campbell, Ronnie (Blyth V)
Campbell-Savours, D N
Cann, Jamie
Chidgey, David
Church, Judith
Clapham, Michael
Clarke, Eric (Midlothian)
Clarke, Tom (Monklands W)
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Coffey, Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank (Stockton N)
Cook, Robin (Livingston)
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Corston, Jean
Cousins, Jim
Cox, Tom
Cummings, John
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Jim (Covy SE)
Darling, Alistair
Davidson, Ian
Davies, Bryan (Oldham C'tral)
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil (Llanelli)
Davies, Ron (Caerphilly)
Davis, Terry (B'ham, H'dge Hl)
Denham, John
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Don
Dobson, Frank
Donohoe, Brian H
Dowd, Jim
Dunnachie, Jimmy
Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Eagle, Ms Angela
Eastham, Ken
Etherington, Bill
Evans, John (St Helens N)
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank (Birkenhead)
Foster, Rt Hon Derek
Foster, Don (Bath)
Foulkes, George
Fraser, John
Fyfe, Maria
Galloway, George
Gapes, Mike
Garrett, John
George, Bruce
Gerrard, Neil
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gill, Christopher
Godsiff, Roger
Grant, Bernie (Tottenham)
Griffiths, Nigel (Edinburgh S)
Griffiths, Win (Bridgend)
Grocott, Bruce
Gunnell, John
Hain, Peter
Hall, Mike
Hanson, David
Hardy, Peter
Harman, Ms Harriet
Harvey, Nick
Henderson, Doug
Heppell, John
Hill, Keith (Streatham)
Hinchliffe, David
Hodge, Margaret
Hoey, Kate
Hogg, Norman (Cumbernauld)
Hood, Jimmy
Hoon, Geoffrey
Howarth, George (Knowsley North)
Howells, Dr. Kim (Pontypridd)
Hoyle, Doug
Hughes, Kevin (Doncaster N)
Hughes, Robert (Aberdeen N)
Hutton, John
Illsley, Eric
Ingram, Adam
Jackson, Glenda (H'stead)
Jackson, Helen (Sheff'ld, H)
Jamieson, David
Janner, Greville
Jones, Jon Owen (Cardiff C)
Jones, Lynne (B'ham S O)
Jones, Martyn (Clwyd, SW)
Jones, Nigel (Cheltenham)
Jowell, Tessa
Keen, Alan
Kennedy, Charles (Ross,C&S)
Kennedy, Jane (Lpool Brdgn)
Khabra, Piara S
Kilfoyle, Peter
Lestor, Joan (Eccles)
Lewis, Terry
Liddell, Mrs Helen
Litherland, Robert
Livingstone, Ken
Lloyd, Tony (Stretford)
Llwyd, Elfyn
Loyden, Eddie
Lynne, Ms Liz
McAllion, John
McAvoy, Thomas
McCartney, Ian
Macdonald, Calum
McKelvey, William
McLeish, Henry
Maclennan, Robert
McMaster, Gordon
McNamara, Kevin

MacShane, Denis
Madden, Max
Maddock, Diana
Mahon, Alice
Mandelson, Peter
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Jim (Leicester, S)
Martin, Michael J (Springburn)
Martlew, Eric
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meale, Alan
Michael, Alun
Michie, Bill (Sheffield Heeley)
Milburn, Alan
Miller, Andrew
Mitchell, Austin (Gt Grimsby)
Moonie, Dr Lewis
Morgan, Rhodri
Morley, Elliot
Morris, Rt Hon John (Aberavon)
Mowlam, Marjorie
Mudie, George
Mullin, Chris
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, Mike (N W'kshire)
O'Brien, William (Normanton)
O'Hara, Edward
Olner, Bill
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Patchett, Terry
Pearson, Ian
Pendry, Tom
Pickthall, Colin
Pike, Peter L
Pope, Greg
Powell, Ray (Ogmore)
Prentice, Bridget (Lew'm E)
Prentice, Gordon (Pendle)
Prescott, Rt Hon John
Primarolo, Dawn
Purchase, Ken
Quin, Ms Joyce
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Rendel, David
Robertson, George (Hamilton)
Robinson, Geoffrey (Co'try NW)
Roche, Mrs Barbara
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, Jeff
Rooney, Terry
Ross, Ernie (Dundee W)
Ruddock, Joan
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Short, Clare
Simpson, Alan
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Andrew (Oxford E)
Smith, Llew (Blaenau Gwent)
Soley, Clive
Spellar, John
Squire, Rachel (Dunfermline W)
Steinberg, Gerry
Stevenson, George
Stott, Roger
Strang, Dr. Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sutcliffe, Gerry
Taylor, Mrs Ann (Dewsbury)
Taylor, Matthew (Truro)
Thompson, Jack (Wansbeck)
Timms, Stephen
Tipping, Paddy
Turner, Dennis
Tyler, Paul
Vaz, Keith
Walker, Rt Hon Sir Harold
Walley, Joan
Wardell, Gareth (Gower)
Wareing, Robert N
Watson, Mike
Wicks, Malcolm
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon Alan (Sw'n W)
Williams, Alan W (Carmarthen)
Wilson, Brian
Winnick, David
Wray, Jimmy
Wright, Dr Tony
Young, David (Bolton SE)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Ainsworth and
Mr. Stephen Byers.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1995, which was laid before this House on 12th June, be approved.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 102(9) (European Standing Committees),

ECONOMIC POLICIES (EUROPEAN COMMUNITY)

That this House takes note of the unnumbered Explanatory Memorandum submitted by HM Treasury on 6th June 1995, relating to the Commission's Recommendation for the Broad Guidelines of the Economic Policies of the Member States and the Community; and agrees with the Government that the emphasis on permanently low inflation and sound public finances, combined with structural measures to tackle the problem of unemployment, is to be welcomed.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

Question agreed to.

Caribbean

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Dr. Liam Fox.]*

7.14 pm

Sir Thomas Arnold (Hazel Grove): I am grateful for this opportunity to raise British policy towards the Caribbean. I shall focus on three issues this evening: first, the continuing problem of Cuba, not least in the light of legislation that is going through the United States Congress; secondly, Britain's constitutional relationship with the five dependent territories; and, thirdly, the difficulties that are clearly apparent with the export of bananas.

Before I deal with each of those issues in detail, I wish to propose an over-arching theme to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary. The Caribbean covers a wide area. With the exception of Cuba, the population of most of the countries is small. Those countries are fragile and often find themselves in difficulty. They clearly need a lot of help and guidance. There is an overriding need for stability in the region. Many of the issues are complex and that complexity often leads to complications of some kind, as my hon. Friend knows only too well. Stability in the modern world does not mean a quiet life, even in the Caribbean, and the image that most people have of the Caribbean is far removed from the reality with which local residents must deal on a day-to-day basis. Stability therefore means a lot of hard work for those engaged in framing, executing and implementing policy. I urge my hon. Friend to promote a policy aimed at stability because I have doubts about the present policy, particularly with regard to the dependent territories, with which I shall deal later in my speech.

I draw the House's attention once again to Cuba, particularly the legislation that is going through the American Congress, which I regard as a retrograde step. That legislation is, I understand, making steady progress, although we cannot be sure exactly what form it will take by the time it emerges, or what the attitude of the United States Administration will be in the event of the legislation passing through Congress.

Before I go further, I wish to draw the House's attention to the declaration that I made in the Register of Members' Interests and make it clear that my host in Havana was a leading British business man, Mr. Michael Ashcroft, who is a keen supporter of the Cuban reform programme and who is engaged in business in Cuba.

On the subject of British business men in Cuba, I was extremely pleased to learn that British-American Tobacco and its chairman, Sir Patrick Sheehy, are now heavily engaged in investment in the Cuban economy. On a matter of more long-standing activity in Cuba, I should like to say how grateful I am personally for all the help and advice that I have been given by Mr. Nicholas Freeman, who has supported his Cuban business through good and difficult times, and who is arguably this country's foremost importer of Cuban cigars.

It is vital that the United States, in particular, should show a greater understanding of some of the issues involved in Cuba. I am a keen supporter of the reform process, and support just as keenly doing everything possible to improve human rights in Cuba. However, I doubt whether those two goals will be furthered in any meaningful way by the legislation currently before the US Congress; on the contrary, that legislation is likely to make life much more difficult. For one thing, it appears to have little flexibility. It has no end date. Obviously, the provisions regarding expropriation and compensation can be regarded as a retrograde step because they open the basis of expropriation and compensation to much wider actions than have been envisaged historically.

I was very pleased that the European Commission, in the figure of Sir Leon Brittan, made strenuous representations to the United States Government at an early stage. On several occasions, Sir Leon drew attention to the difficulties that the legislation was likely to cause European Community countries. He said that he believed that the new legislation, if enacted and implemented, might lead to legal chaos by extending US jurisdiction to possible, and as yet unregistered, property claims by US citizens who have held Cuban citizenship at the moment of compensation.

Sir Leon said:

"I think that these collective provisions will interfere with European Union companies and individuals doing business in Cuba, to such an extent that a negative spill-over into the overall transatlantic relationship appears unavoidable. I also think that the approach taken in this legislation would not help a peaceful and orderly transition towards democracy in Cuba."

I agree with him about that.

I wish to draw the attention of the House to a statement issued by Mr. David Jessop, executive director of the Caribbean Council for Europe, in the US recently, in which he said:

"Attempts to prohibit the entry into the US of sugars, syrups and molasses from third countries unless it is certified that such products will not be imported from Cuba"

are to be deprecated. He said:

"The European Union and individual member states have already indicated that such measures violate international law, would be challenged under WTO rules and would lead to retaliation. In this and other contexts the bill runs counter to the US approach to free trade."

I strongly agree with Mr. Jessop about that. I hope that, even at this late stage, the United States Congress and then the United States Administration will reconsider before going ahead with that further tightening of the United States' embargo.

Cuba, with a population of 10 million, is such an important entity in Caribbean terms that instability in respect of Cuba only helps to promote a feeling of uncertainty and instability throughout the region. All of us, including the United States, should work towards a solution to the problem of Cuba. We know that it is a difficult one in terms of the United States. We know that it engenders very high, passionate feelings, not least in Florida and in Miami. However, far from intensifying difficulties, surely the sensible approach is to try to persuade the Cuban Government to speed up the process of reform, to do more in respect of human rights and gradually to bring about an improvement so that there can be greater confidence and then, using those confidence-building measures, to promote an understanding between the United States and Cuba, which could lead to the dismantling of the present legislation and the lifting of the embargo.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will be able to say, in this short debate, what the Government are doing to further the representations that were made earlier

[Sir Thomas Arnold]

by the European Commission and, I believe, by officials from the Department of Trade and Industry, especially in Washington this year.

Let me move on to discuss the position of the dependent territories. I am not an expert in the matters to which I shall refer, but I have followed developments in the dependent territories and I feel a certain unease. All is not well. I feel that so strongly that I urge my hon. Friend to consider carefully—and perhaps not give me an answer tonight—whether the time has come to set up a further inquiry to consider the relationship of our Government with the dependent territories, including the constitutional position and our attitude to the possibility of further political reform.

I have taken a long interest, in the House, in the position of dependent territories. Indeed, I instituted an Adjournment debate about the Falkland Islands and other dependent territories as long ago as 1982. Given the problems of the Caribbean, the five territories for which we are responsible require more understanding than they are receiving at present. One of the complaints is that the secretariat in Barbados has distanced the dependent territories even further from London. On this reading, the secretariat is too bureaucratic, cautious and slow. I do not know how much weight to give to that criticism, but I suspect that there is some truth in it. I hope that my hon. Friend will comment on that point this evening and perhaps reflect on it further in due course.

The Government's policy is to promote self-sufficiency, but that clearly carries with it some considerable costs for the local governments, chief ministers and others as well as for our Government. The administration costs of the dependent territories are not negligible. In answer to a recent parliamentary question, I was told that those costs were about £20 million per year. We must consider that cost carefully in terms of value for money and whether our relationships are exactly as we would wish.

There is a feeling that the governors should consult the chief ministers about reserve powers more often than they appear to do. The chief ministers are not saying that those reserve powers should not exist, or that they should not be used if circumstances warrant it; however, they would like to have more say in how some of those powers are exercised. If we are to be creative and forward-looking and try to establish sensible arrangements that will take us into the next century in respect of the territories, we should establish an inquiry to examine the situation.

I shall not say what form I think that inquiry should take; the Government can decide perfectly well whether it should be a royal commission or something less grand. Perhaps a more informal inquiry would be appropriate. After all, what is sensible in one dependent territory may not necessarily be sensible in another.

What is interesting about the dependent territories in the Caribbean is that there is no great demand for independence. Therefore, we have to find ways and means, short of independence, of meeting the legitimate aspirations of the islands to govern themselves while at the same time remaining under the protection of the Crown and all that that affords.

I mentioned earlier the need for stability while recognising the problems of the islands. I think that those problems can be summed up in one word—jobs. The islands need jobs, jobs and more jobs. Although some of the larger investors, such as Cable and Wireless, should be welcomed and are important and significant, the overall employment picture remains difficult. Unless that problem is addressed, there will be no stability in the Caribbean.

The Caribbean continues to face real problems with illegal drugs. That should concern us greatly. I was certainly appalled to hear—I accept that it is only a rumour—that voices in the Treasury are suggesting that we should move the dependent territories towards independence on public expenditure grounds. I think that that would be a very unwise step, given what we know and what the Governments of the dependent territories, including the chief ministers, know about the difficulties that they face with regard to the importation of illegal drugs and the flow of those drugs through the territories.

Banking in the dependent territories is something of a hotch-potch. Different arrangements are in place in different territories, although that is not a bad thing in itself. The whole business needs greater clarity. Time is passing, and although I understand the Government's desire to ensure that things are done properly and that there are no grounds for believing that money laundering, for example, is taking place, more work needs to be done as soon as possible.

The time has come for us to make up our minds about the dependent territories and their form of government. What should their future status be? What relationship should they have with Whitehall? It is fair to say that Ministers have been repeating a certain mantra for some time, and fresh thinking is required because the problems to which I have referred will not go away. There is some uneasiness and a feeling that a new relationship needs to be developed.

That brings me to the difficult issue of the regime for bananas. I have had correspondence and briefing papers from the Caribbean Banana Exporters Association about the "banana crisis", saying:

> "This is a time of great anxiety for the Caribbean—and particularly for those states whose economies are largely dependent on their banana exports to Europe. Their traditional market in the European Union—essentially in the United Kingdom—is under serious threat from political campaigns both in the USA and within the European Union. For some, notably the Windward Islands, this could mean the loss of almost 60 per cent. of all their export income."

The association explains that Germany and some other member states, which hitherto had an unrestricted market, were opposed to the present system from the start and continues:

> "More recently, at the behest of Chiquita, the world's leading banana trader, the USA launched proceedings against the European Union, threatening trade sanctions unless changes were made which would increase Chiquita's market share. This increase would in practice be at the expense of the Caribbean.
>
> Last week the new European Commissioner for Agriculture, Dr. Fischler, on a visit to the USA, made the astonishing public statement that he personally did not like the EU banana regime and would be seeking a mandate from the Agriculture Council in July to negotiate changes to it with the USA. He mentioned in particular the need to review the quota and other mechanisms which currently protect Caribbean and other African Caribbean and Pacific imports."

The issue is extremely serious and I hope that my hon. Friend will make it clear this evening that the Government strongly support Caribbean interests in this matter. There is still a potential blocking minority under the European

Union voting system, so we can stand firm by the present arrangements. In essence, I hope that the Government will give every signal that they intend to stand firm, in particular to avoid damaging arbitrary increases in the quota or changes to the preferential licensing arrangements.

I referred to the fragility of some of the Caribbean economies and the problems in respect of bananas illustrate that only too well. There are those who say that the situation is potentially dangerous and that the current United States threat will promote instability, further uncertainty and difficulties all round.

I recognise that some issues go way beyond the present position and touch on the whole nature of the European Community post-Lomé IV and the thinking on and relationship with the Caribbean region. Current thinking appears to favour specific regional agreements in which the Caribbean and central America will be treated in much the same way through advanced co-operation agreements. There are some difficulties with that approach. Above all, it is essential that whatever is decided should take account of the different sizes of the Caribbean economies.

France and Germany have already begun to consider post-Lomé IV relations with the Caribbean. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could say what work is in hand with regard to Britain's interests in the matter and what line he is taking in Brussels. After all, future policy for the Caribbean will be decided, I suspect, as much in Brussels as it will be here and in other EC capitals. That is the nature of the relationship into which we have entered with our EU colleagues. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend will outline the manner in which he proposes to negotiate in the Community on these problems. The difficulties of the banana-producing countries are real and urgent, and solutions are necessary.

To conclude, let me go back to the beginning and say that a policy that produces stability, however paradoxical it may sound, will be an active policy. Implementation will require a good deal of thought and care, not least because of the complexity of the issues.

I recognise that the difficulties surrounding Cuba are formidable, but if we do not face up to them, and if Britain does not have a clear, coherent policy, that will only magnify some of the other problems in the region. We have already seen what the Cuban refugee problem can mean in the case of the dependent territory of the Cayman Islands. My hon. Friend may be able to say a word about developments in that regard. I understand that the situation is now much better; I would be grateful for my hon. Friend's confirmation of that.

Above all, I should like to make it clear that I would like to see the Caribbean in an optimistic, settled frame of mind, with some of the problems to which I have referred this evening being attenuated by a mixture of wise policy and constructive, good government. The region needs help, for the reasons I have given. I know that the House and the Government want to do everything possible to bring that about.

7.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tony Baldry): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove (Sir T. Arnold) for initiating this debate. The Caribbean is a diverse and exciting region, and we take it very seriously. After all, we have long-standing friendships with all the Caribbean, and a quarter of the members of the Commonwealth are to be found there.

The Caribbean is a significant market, too. Taking trade and investment as a whole, the Caribbean is a large market for the United Kingdom, accounting for £1 billion of visible exports last year. Non-oil exports have risen from £400 million a few years ago to £700 million last year, and we have an estimated £2.7 billion-worth of investment in the region.

In addition to our trade links, we maintain close links in other ways with all the countries of the region—the human links represented by Caribbean communities in this country, for instance. There are continuing close associations in many areas such as law and education, and we give and receive close support to and from our Commonwealth colleagues in the Caribbean.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hertford and Stortford (Mr. Wells), chairman of the all-party Caribbean group, who is also present, could testify to the fact that the Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean support us. I hope that we support them as well.

I shall say a little more about bananas later, but I think that Commonwealth colleagues would recognise that we have been in the forefront of seeking, in the EU, to represent their best interests when it comes to commodities such as rum; and we have been staunch defenders of the EU banana regime, not least because we see it as a way of helping to represent not just our interests but those of our friends in the Caribbean.

I am glad to say that our Commonwealth colleagues there give us support, too. We received close support from them recently in the United Nations. Two recent examples are the extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and the CARICOM contribution to the solution of the Haiti crisis.

Traditionally, we have strong links with many countries in the Caribbean. Although they have mainly been with the Anglophone parts of the Caribbean, we are understandably paying increasing attention to the Hispanic-speaking countries.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney, North and Stoke Newington): The Minister must be aware of the feeling in the Caribbean nations that, as Britain has become more involved with new friends in the European Union, it has become less concerned about the weakening of links with old friends in the Caribbean. I hope that he will accept that people of Caribbean origin in this country are very worried about Her Majesty's Government's policy on the Caribbean, and want the Government to use their influence in the United States to ensure that its Cuban policy is driven less by domestic electoral concerns and more by concern about the stability of the region.

Mr. Baldry: I think that the hon. Lady is mistaken. We have a close and continuing relationship with the Caribbean, and I do not believe that a single Caribbean country feels that Britain's attention to the region has lessened. Indeed, I think that most Caribbean Commonwealth colleagues recognise that Britain is unique in being a member of both the Commonwealth and the European Union. On many occasions—the recent negotiations on rum provide a straightforward example—that has enabled us to articulate the best interests of Caribbean Commonwealth colleagues in the European Union.

[Mr. Baldry]

I shall deal with Cuba shortly. I do not think that hon. Members are likely to fall out on that subject, but I also do not think that any suggestion that Britain has other than a close and continuing friendship with the whole Caribbean region can be sustained. As my hon. Friend said, we still have some continuing and specific responsibilities for our five dependent territories in the region: Anguilla, the British Virgin islands, the Cayman islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos islands.

My hon. Friend raised three specific issues. The first was Cuba. The situation in Cuba is changing—for the better, we hope. A number of useful visits have been made by, for instance, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Technology. That was a welcome first visit. We hope that economic reform in Cuba will continue; we also hope that political relations will progress in tandem with our improving trade and investment links. While we have made some headway, we still have our differences, human rights and fundamental freedoms being areas of particular concern; but, despite those difficulties, we are making progress, and I hope that that encouraging trend will continue.

Because we do not believe in the desirability of isolating Cuba, we cannot share the views that lie behind the Helms-Burton legislation recently introduced in the United States Congress. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott), who asked about Cuba, has disappeared; if she were here, I hope that she would be reassured to learn that we are strongly opposed to the extra-territorial provisions of that legislation, and have supported the efforts of Sir Leon Brittan to bring home to the American Government the damage that the legislation could cause to world trade. The response of the US Administration clearly reflects the representations that we and our other partners have made.

As I said earlier, although our traditional links have been with the Anglophone part of the Caribbean, we are very conscious of the increasing importance of the Hispanic-speaking countries. For that reason, we not only pay more attention to Cuba, but—I am glad to say—have decided to reopen our embassy in the Dominican Republic.

I pay tribute to the sterling efforts of our honorary consul in Santo Domingo, Maureen Tejada, who has maintained our links with the country and facilitated the efforts of United Kingdom business men there, as well as looking after the increasing number of British tourists. We all owe her a great debt, and I am delighted that we shall soon send an ambassador to the Dominican Republic again.

I also pay tribute to Dr. Ian Court, our other honorary consul of note in the region—in San Juan, Puerto Rico—who has contributed significantly to the upsurge in our commercial relations with Puerto Rico.

I would also like to mention the work done by Margaret Guercy, our vice-consul in Port au Prince, who is currently in the United Kingdom on a well-deserved visit after the difficult times which Haiti went through last summer. We have recently sponsored an important visit to London by a leading figure in the new political scene in Haiti. We hope that the elections that are due to take place there will soon help to improve stability, because, as my hon. Friend said, what we all wish to see in the Caribbean region as a whole is stability.

The Caribbean dependent territories are all specific and all different. Taking them from west to east, the Cayman Islands has long since been weaned off direct aid and now has a higher GDP per head than Hong Kong or Singapore. However, the Turks and Caicos Islands are still dependent on British aid, although they have recently made considerable strides through the development of tourism and offshore finance.

As I will make clear in a moment, it is important that offshore finance should be properly regulated, or the results may prove counter-productive, as happened in the past. The situation in the Turks and Caicos is now much healthier than it was in the late 1980s, when, as some hon. Members may remember, there were a number of unfortunate difficulties.

Offshore finance and tourism have also been the making of the British Virgin Islands, which is now broadly self-sufficient and no longer reliant on significant United Kingdom aid. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Government of the British Virgin Islands, and in particular to the late Chief Minister, Lavity Stoutt, who sadly died recently and who did so much to encourage the development of his territory.

Anguilla has a population of only 9,000 and although it has also been successful, small islands such as these have special problems in providing essential Government services and maintaining the infrastructure for their development. That applies also to Montserrat, where our aid programme is making an important contribution.

By providing manpower and expertise in areas such as the budget, auditing, police and customs, we can improve the quality of government in the dependent territories. This is essential, because the future of the territories, whether they decide to move to independence or not—and we have made it clear that it is their decision—will inevitably depend on their being well run.

My hon. Friend asked whether I might undertake a review of the dependent territories. I think that the definitive text on our approach to the dependent territories was given by my right hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, North (Mr. Eggar), one of my predecessors as Under-Secretary of State, who, in December 1987, said in reply to a written question:

"Following the concern expressed within the Commonwealth about the security of small states, and the suspension of ministerial government in the Turks and Caicos Islands, we have conducted a review of policy towards our five Caribbean dependent territories and Bermuda. We did so in the light of our commitment to the principle of self-determination and our determination to live up to our obligations under the United Nations charter, and our responsibilities for the good government and development of the dependent territories.

The review concluded that we should not seek in any way to influence opinion in the territories on the question of independence. We would not urge them to consider moving to independence, but we remain ready to respond positively when this is the clearly and constitutionally expressed wish of the people."

That is still exactly our position today.

My right hon. Friend continued:

"As a result of the review, we are, however, implementing a number of administrative measures to improve the effectiveness with which we discharge our obligations to ensure the good administration, and economic and social development of the dependent territories. The reasonable needs of the dependent territories will continue, as before, to be a first charge on United Kingdom aid funds."—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1987; Vol. 124, c. *574*.]

We have since then sought to make a number of changes to improve our relations with the dependent territories. For example, a little while ago, we instituted a dependent territories ministerial group. It is a ministerial group that meets regularly twice a year to discuss developments in the territories. A number of ministerial colleagues who are members of the group have visited the Caribbean and take an active interest in the dependent territories.

For example, in April my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General attended a meeting of the Attorneys-General of the five Caribbean territories and of Bermuda; and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary to the Lord Chancellor's Department has recently been to Montserrat and Anguilla to examine some of the problems and requirements of the judicial system there.

As has been said, we also set up a regional secretariat for the Caribbean dependent territories based in Bridgetown alongside the British development division in the Caribbean. The secretariat concluded formal agreements with the majority of the Caribbean dependent territories to ensure that our aid is well planned and properly spent, and that it achieves value for money.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hazel Grove suggested that the secretariat has tended to increase the administrative distance between London and the dependent territories. Having had the opportunity to visit all the Caribbean dependent territories and the regional secretariat in Bridgetown, I am bound to say that I cannot accept that suggestion.

I pay close attention to the maintenance of direct and close links with Chief Ministers. Last October, I attended the annual meeting in Montserrat of Chief Ministers and Governors. At the end of this month—very shortly—I hope to see many of the Chief Ministers again in London.

In connection with that visit, we have encouraged the Commonwealth Development Corporation to organise an investment seminar, which I hope will help some of the dependent territories in their search for inward investment. I also intend to go to Brussels with the Chief Ministers and Governors to seek greater support from the European Union for our dependent territories in the Caribbean.

The Government have paid and continue to pay close attention to the needs of the dependent territories. I take this opportunity to thank the Governors and the heads of regional secretariats for their efforts. I also pay tribute to the work being done by Chief Ministers and others within the dependent territories to ensure the continuing prosperity of their own territories. However, we shall, of course, continue to ensure that our international obligations are adequately discharged at a reasonable cost to the British taxpayer, and that the contingent liabilities associated with these territories do not increase.

There are no plans to change the constitutional relationship between the Government and the Caribbean dependent territories. It is certainly not in the interests of good government to contemplate a further devolution of powers to Caribbean dependent territories. That would leave us with full responsibility, but without the power to discharge that responsibility properly.

My hon. Friend mentioned reserve powers. There is an enormous amount of misunderstanding about these powers, which are, by definition, powers in reserve for the Governor to use if the Government of the dependent territory involved do not discharge their responsibilities properly. There should be no need to discuss the reserve powers with the Governor if a territory has been properly governed and run.

Of course, from time to time the dependent territories have problems that are wholly outside their control. My hon. Friend mentioned the problem of illegal migration. Two of the dependent territories have recently been affected by serious influxes of economic migrants.

Last summer, the Cayman Islands received almost 1,200 illegal immigrants from Cuba within a matter of days. That figure must be put against a resident population of only 30,000. I am glad that, as a result of the intense and humane efforts of the Governor and the Government of the Cayman Islands, and with the help of our partners in the United States, the figure has subsided significantly. Indeed, I think that almost all the economic migrants have left and gone elsewhere to settle.

I pay tribute to everyone in the Cayman Islands who helped to deal with that extremely difficult human problem sympathetically and in a humane way. It is a matter of some note that one could have had that influx of migrants without it attracting any press attention here or elsewhere, so well was it dealt with.

In the Turks and Caicos Islands, there have been several waves of illegal migration from Haiti. Just after Easter, we took action again, with the help of our United States friends, to try to curb the latest flow, but as long as conditions in Cuba and Haiti remain difficult, the potential problem is likely to remain.

The last substantive issue that my hon. Friend mentioned was that of bananas. Let me make it absolutely clear to him that we have taken, and will continue to take, an active role on that issue in Brussels and in Washington. It is an important issue. I held a meeting with the leaders of the four Windward Island countries mainly concerned, when I was in the Caribbean to attend the biennial conference of our heads of mission earlier this year. The Windward Governments have accepted the recommendations of a study funded with British aid money, which sets out a comprehensive strategy for restructuring the industry, to make production more efficient and competitive. That is beginning to happen in the Caribbean, for example, with Jamaican bananas. We are also working closely with the local European Union aid office to ensure that European Union funds available for restructuring, such as STABEX, are used to maximum effect.

We have worked hard to secure an increase in Belize's annual quota, and the 15,000 tonnes allocated in January are a step forward. But we are also supporting amendments to the banana regulation currently under discussion in Brussels, which would bring additional benefits to Belize and other Commonwealth Caribbean producers.

If bananas fail and if there is not sufficient economic diversification, there is always the danger that we shall start to see an increase in the trafficking and production of illicit drugs, so we must ensure that we do all that we can to help promote an environment that allows the Caribbean to prosper through equitable trading arrangements with us and north America.

Ms Abbott: The Minister, I hope, will not need me to remind him that, for many of the Leeward Islands,

[Ms Abbott]

bananas represent the greater part of their foreign exchange and are important creators of work, which is so important in creating social stability. The Minister talked about restructuring, but at the end of the day bananas from the Caribbean cannot compete on a level playing field with bananas from south America, because the plantations will always be at an advantage compared with the small family allotments in the Caribbean. What are the social consequences for the Caribbean of the collapse of the banana industry and the failure of Her Majesty's Government to support it?

Mr. Baldry: The hon. Lady has been in and out of this Adjournment debate like a yo-yo. I would be prepared to listen to her advice on the Caribbean a little more closely if she was at least able to tell the difference between the Windward and the Leeward Islands.

Ms Abbott: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Baldry: No.

We are also encouraging diversification in the Caribbean economies and are generous in our aid for that. I note that the new Prime Minister of Dominica, who was elected earlier this week, is a specialist in agriculture and, of course, we wish him and his new Government well. I take this opportunity to pay a public tribute to the achievements of his predecessor, Dame Eugenia Charles. The Commonwealth and Commonwealth meetings will be all the poorer for the loss of her presence.

One has to remember the dynamics of the situation that underlies the whole issue of bananas in the Caribbean. If access is reduced, farmers will go out of business, and the World bank has made some bleak forecasts in that respect. But the volume of bananas to be transported will also be reduced, and that will make their transport less economic, which will, in turn, increase the unit costs. Moreover, if fewer boats call, it will be more difficult to ship any alternative products, such as passion fruit, and the chances of a successful diversification strategy replacing the banana industry will be correspondingly reduced.

Those are the economic facts, and I do not think that anyone can be in any doubt as to why we support, and will continue to support, the EU banana regime and why we support, and will continue to support, Commonwealth Caribbean colleagues whose livelihoods are largely dependent on bananas. But they must recognise, as we recognise, that their banana industries have to become as efficient as possible.

We all recognise that we must maximise the potential for economic diversification in the region and, of course, there is much successful diversification in the Caribbean. One aspect of that is the growth of offshore banking and financial services, and the development of those services has made an enormous difference to the well-being of many people in the region. There are dangers that the opportunities provided by those services will be abused and will threaten them. We have paid special attention to that and a full-time expert is attached to our mission in Bridgetown, to advise on and improve the necessary safeguards.

All our Caribbean dependent territories now operate banking guidelines that are based on the Basle principles. We are discussing the introduction of legislation on regulatory co-operation and international businesses and exempt companies. Our success in deterring shady dealing was amply demonstrated in recent months by the closure of the Guardian bank in the Cayman Islands and the anti-money-laundering operation that was mounted so effectively with the aid of the United States authorities and the diligence of the Governor in Anguilla. There is an increasing realisation that the key to building a sustainable and successful offshore financial industry is to have effective and transparent regulations.

There is always a suspicion that the financial regulations that every dependent Caribbean territory has to introduce are in some way tougher than those that are introduced by other such territories. That is not the case. We want to ensure that every dependent Caribbean territory has tough, proper financial regulations, so that there is only sound money in those islands and there is no suggestion of bad money coming to them. That must be in the interests of those territories and I am sure that they recognise that.

One of the reasons for the offshore financial industry suffering an unsatisfactory image in the past is that it can offer opportunities to drug dealers and other criminals to support their illegal operations. The cultivation of drugs in the Caribbean is not high despite the natural advantages of climate, but the area has become a significant conduit for the transport of drugs between the major sources of supply in south America and the major market for narcotics in north America and Europe. There have, for instance, been some very large seizures in the waters off the British Virgin Islands. We are providing considerable assistance to both independent and dependent territories in the region to combat that threat. The West Indies guard ship has played an important role in that connection, often co-operating with other Governments who have interests in the area such as the American, French and Dutch Governments.

At our suggestion, the United Nations international drugs control programme organisers will hold a workshop in the region later this year to agree further practical anti-narcotics measures.

There are many challenges ahead in the Caribbean, and probably the most important of them is to encourage good government. Without that, dependence on aid and drugs will be difficult to avoid. For example, it is better to have trade in bananas than unproductive aid that might be channelled into unsatisfactory activities such as drug trafficking or money laundering. The North American free trade area is a significant new factor in Caribbean trade. The key to the Caribbean's response will be the ability of all its diverse elements to overcome traditional differences. For that reason, we are watching with close interest the formation of the Association of Caribbean States.

We already give strong support to the Caribbean Community and Common Market, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States and the regional security system. In that context, we have maintained a British military advisory and training team based in Barbados. We also maintain a naval presence in the Caribbean and the guard ship has played an important role not only in relation to the defence of Belize but recently in connection with the Haiti crisis. In London, we continue our grant to the West India Committee and I hope to see the leading members of that committee again next week.

I hope that I have answered all the questions of my hon. Friend. If the hon. Member for Hackney, North and Stoke Newington wishes to ask a final question, I should be glad to try to answer it.

Ms Abbott: The Minister was dismissive of my remarks earlier, but I am anxious that Her Majesty's Government, in their policy formulation in relation to the Caribbean, take the interests and genuine concerns of people of Caribbean origin living here as seriously as the interests of business people. I re-emphasise that there is a genuine concern and wish that we be taken seriously when we speak out about our relatives and interests in the Caribbean, just as business men are taken seriously.

Mr. Baldry: I am amazed that the hon. Lady should feel it necessary to make such a point. Let me take just one example: the Caribbean dependent territory of Anguilla. I have probably seen far more members of the Anguilla community resident in the United Kingdom than people with business interests in Anguilla. As I made clear earlier, in this country, a large population of Caribbean origin obviously take a close interest in what takes place in the Caribbean and we pay considerable respect and attention to their views, but anyone who has any knowledge of the Caribbean, and particularly of the Commonwealth Caribbean, will recognise that the UK is, has been and continues to be at the forefront of being a friend to those countries.

The Caribbean is an important region to us. We have many friends there. It will continue to be an important region to us and I am confident that, as we go into the 21st century, we shall continue to have many friends there.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at six minutes past Eight o'clock.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday, 6 June 1995.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food which items from the national food stockpile remain to be liquidated. [26973]

Mr. Jack: Flour is the only commodity remaining in the stockpile. We expect that remaining stocks will be disposed of before the end of September.

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26242]

Mr. Jack: In accordance with the citizens charter initiative customer service standards have been published for the MAFF regional organisation, inspectorates, most agencies and public facing non-departmental public bodies. These standards include target times for responding to correspondence; they also make reference to the prompt answering of telephone calls.

On performance, I refer the hon. member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) on 23 May 1995, *Official Report*, column *508*, and also to the reply given to my hon. Friend the member for Havant (Mr. Willetts) on 20 July 1994, *Official Report*, column *356*.

Performance data on answering telephone calls are not currently held by MAFF and could not be collected without incurring disproportionate cost.

Tobacco Fraud

Mr. Marlow: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food by what date he expects the Italian and Greek authorities will have concluded their inquiries into alleged tobacco fraud related to the suicide of the former head of the tobacco sector. [26121]

Mr. Jack: This is a matter for the Italian and Greek authorities who, we understand, are liaising closely with the Commission.

Central Science Laboratory

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to make a statement on the future organisation and location of his Central Science Laboratory. [26964]

Mr. Waldegrave: The Central Science Laboratory currently occupies five major sites at Slough, Berkshire; Worplesdon, Surrey; Harpenden, Hertfordshire; Norwich, Norfolk and Torry, Aberdeen and a number of smaller sites including those at Luddington, Warwickshire and Cambridge, Cambridgeshire.

CSL provides essential services within Great Britain to MAFF and other Government Departments to promote the safe and efficient supply of food and to protect the environment. In order to ensure that it continues to do so on a cost-effective basis and to overcome serious shortcomings in the buildings on the older CSL sites, a new laboratory complex is under construction near York. This will be available for occupation in the summer of 1996. It has been known for some time that the staff and facilities at the CSL sites apart from Norwich and Torry would relocate to York with the subsequent closure of the sites.

I have announced today the financial and other targets that I have set for CSL in 1995–96. The CSL will not achieve cost recovery in 1995–96 and action needs to be taken to ensure that a deficit does not occur in future years.

Accordingly, it is my intention that the CSL Torry laboratory will also relocate to York in September 1996. Unfortunately, the Torry site has very high overheads and the laboratory there has not been able to compete successfully in the research and development market and will operate at a loss in 1995–96.

I have agreed with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland to transfer to the Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen, responsibility for a range of work on the monitoring of algal toxins in shellfish and water and the analytical capability for hydrocarbons, both areas of particular relevance to Scotland. I will also ask my officials to explore with the business, academic and research community in Aberdeen any future opportunities for the site. Much of the work which my Department commissions at CSL Torry is subject to open competition and I would welcome interest from scientific establishments in Scotland as well as elsewhere. Officials will explore the further in the light of any interest which emerges.

All mobile staff at the Torry site will have the opportunity to relocate to York, and some are likely to be transfer to the Scottish Office marine laboratory at Aberdeen. I am hopeful therefore that closure can be managed without any compulsory redundancies among these staff. Arrangements for seeking job opportunities for non-mobile staff among other Government establishments in the area will be operated in the usual way.

There are no plans to relocate the CSL Norwich laboratory which is competing successfully on a national and EU basis for science funding.

Overall, my aim is to ensure that these changes will mean no diminution in the service provided to all parts of Great Britain, including Scotland.

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what targets have been set for the Central Science Laboratory in 1995–96. [26962]

Mr. Waldegrave: I have set the Central Science Laboratory the following strategic targets for 1995–96:

Financial:

—97 per cent. recovery of full costs after allowing for relocation costs

—1 per cent. improvement in utilisation of productive time

—1 per cent. improvement of ratio of overhead to total costs

Service delivery:

—at least 90 per cent. of work completed to time and within budget

—achieve a mean score of three on a scale of zero to five for the assessment of customer satisfaction using the established methodology.

These are demanding targets which challenge the agency but reflect the considerable planning and disruption likely to arise from the relocation to a new purpose built laboratory in Yorkshire which will occur during 1996.

Agriculture Council

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the Agriculture Council held in Brussels on 29 and 30 May; and if he will make a statement. [26961]

Mr. Waldegrave: This meeting of the Council, at which I represented the United Kingdom, concentrated mainly on a proposal from the Commission for changes to the agri-monetary arrangements and on rules for the welfare of animals in transport.

No decisions were reached. The Council will return to both subjects at its next meeting on 19 and 20 June, when it will also aim to decide farm prices and related measures for 1995–96.

The Commission's proposal on agri-money would reduce the cost and scope of the compensatory measures accompanying any green rate revaluation that took place in 1995. It is the present rules on compensation which have led the Council and Commission to delay green rate revaluations that should have taken place, resulting in distortion of trade and excessive levels of support in the Community as a whole. I strongly supported the Commission's proposal. The German Minister, with some support from others, suggested alternative changes that would lead to permanent differences in payments to farmers in different member states. I made it clear that this would be wholly unacceptable.

The discussion on animal transport showed that member states are broadly agreed on the main lines of new arrangements, but still differ on the key questions of maximum journey times and the length of breaks between journeys. I welcomed the assurance from the French presidency that it gives high priority to this issue, and urged all parties to make great efforts to reach an agreement in June.

The Council formally adopted by majority vote, with Germans and Netherlands opposing, the measures necessary to implement the compromise decision on Italian, Spanish and Greek milk quotas, reached at the October meeting of the Economic and Finance Council. It also adopted unanimously a proposal fixing support prices for certain fruits and vegetables for June 1995.

International Whaling Commission

Mrs. Angela Knight: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the outcome of the International Whaling Commission held in Dublin from 29 May to 2 June 1995; and if he will make a statement. [26963]

Mr. Jack: The International Whaling Commission's 47th annual meeting was held in Dublin from 29 May to 2 June. The UK delegation was composed of officials from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, assisted by officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department of the Environment and representatives of environmental organisations. For the UK, the meeting was a satisfactory one, and we achieved virtually all our objectives. The meeting confirmed that the IWC remains the only effective international body for the conservation and protection of whales.

I am pleased to report that the moratorium on commercial whaling, which has been in force since 1985–86, remains in force and unweakened. A request by Japan for an interim quota of 50 minke whales, to be taken by its coastal communities, was once again rejected.

At last year's IWC meeting doubts were raised about the estimate of minke whale numbers in the north-east Atlantic produced by Norwegian scientists, and endorsed by the IWC's scientific committee as the best figures available. Detailed discussions on this complex issue took place over the year, but this year's meeting of the scientific committee was unable to resolve the differing views and concluded that there was currently no valid estimate for this stock. Despite this uncertainty about the number of minke whales present in the north-east Atlantic, Norway restarted its commercial whaling operations on 2 May.

At the meeting of the IWC itself, Norway's behaviour was widely condemned. A strongly-worded resolution was adopted calling on Norway to reconsider its objection to the moratorium, under which it is legally able to continue commercial whaling, and to halt its whaling activities immediately. In supporting this resolution, we made it clear that we deplored Norway's continued refusal to observe the moratorium, which in our view weakened the credibility of the IWC.

At the meeting, very widespread concern was also expressed about scientific whaling. A resolution was adopted calling for all scientific whaling within IWC sanctuaries and, in particular, the southern ocean sanctuary, to be halted. The IWC also adopted a general resolution on scientific whaling, initiated and introduced by the UK, which called for research on whales to be conducted, in principle, by non-lethal means, with the killing of whales for research purposes permitted only in the most exceptional circumstances. The resolution also requested the IWC's scientific committee to review all existing, and future, programmes for research involving the killing of whales against these criteria. This resolution received a very wide measure of support. Although it will not prevent countries from authorising scientific whaling, since this is expressly provided for under the IWC's parent treaty, it will enable the IWC in future to reach clear conclusions on whether it considers any lethal research to be justifiable and to condemn unnecessary scientific whaling.

Little progress was made on the revised management scheme, which is being devised to regulate all aspects of any future commercial whaling which might be permitted in the future. Discussion concentrated on the inspection and observation scheme which will be needed, as part of the RMS, to ensure that any new rules are properly observed. Positions on this scheme remain far apart; we are continuing to insist that the RMS must include a fully effective, comprehensive and enforceable inspection and observation scheme.

The IWC meeting was preceded by a workshop on whale killing methods. The UK has consistently argued that if whales are to be killed, this is to be done humanely, and we were represented at the workshop by a strong team of scientists and veterinarians. The workshop agreed to a revision of the humane killing action plan agreed by the IWC in 1992, and this was subsequently adopted by the IWC itself.

A particular topic of discussion at the workshop was secondary killing methods and, most notably, the use of the electric lance to kill whales wounded, but not killed, by explosive harpoons. Papers presented to the workshop indicating that the electric lance is ineffective and inflicts unnecessary suffering received considerable support, although the workshop was not able to reach definitive conclusions on this issue. In these circumstances, we did not seek a vote on a proposal to ban the use of the electric lance, which would have required a three quarters majority to pass, which UK and New Zealand had put forward earlier; instead we introduced a resolution calling on the IWC to re-examine the issue next year, with a view to reaching a decision and urging all countries to suspend the use of the electric lance in the meantime. This was adopted with widespread support.

The UK delegation also put forward a resolution on killing methods used in the Faroese pilot whale drive hunt; this was adopted by consensus. This followed a discussion on this drive hunt in the workshop. The resolution encouraged the Faroese Government to continue work on introducing alternatives to the gaff and on other ways of improving the humaneness of the hunt. It is particularly helpful to have secured the commitment of the Faroese authorities to these improvements. Introducing this resolution, we emphasised our continuing concern at the welfare aspects of the drive hunt, and said that we hoped alternatives to the gaff would be introduced as soon as possible and the use of the gaff banned.

Environmental threats to whales and other cetaceans again received attention. The scientific committee reviewed the results of a workshop held in March on the possible effects of pollution on cetaceans, and confirmed arrangements for the forthcoming workshop on the possible implications of climate change. In the IWC meeting itself, we helped promote a resolution carrying forward the recommendations of the pollution workshop and urging Governments to send experts to the climate change workshop. This is an important new topic for the IWC, and we look forward to making further progress at next year's meeting.

At the meeting, the IWC made further progress on devising guidelines for whalewatching, another issue to which it will return next year, and adopted a resolution, following up the one it agreed last year, for improving mechanisms to prevent illegal trade in whale meat. This calls for stockpiles of whalemeat predating the moratorium to be disposed of domestically in the near future, and encourages the development and use of DNA testing of whalemeat to establish the species of origin.

The IWC's 48th annual meeting will be held in Aberdeen next June. The UK will, once again, be playing an active role, and I believe that, as a result of this year's meeting, we are well placed to make further progress on a wide range of issues.

Spanish Fishing Subsidies

Mr. Steen: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much subsidy has been given to Spain in each of the last three years from the European Community for fishing; and what is the forecast of funding to Spain for each of the next three years. [24681]

Mr. Jack *[holding answer 17 May 1995]:* Prior to 1994, European Community aid to the fishing industry was financed under both the guidance and guarantee sections of the budget. Figures for 1992 and 1993 in the table relate only to certain parts fisheries guidance expenditure—these were extracted from the European Court of Auditor's annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. Those for guarantee expenditure are set out in reply to my hon. Friend's related question about subsidies to Spanish agriculture.

From 1994 onwards, the financial instrument for fisheries guidance came into force, amalgamating the various fisheries structures and marketing and processing regulations. The figures in the table for the years 1994–1998 show the amount of Community funding available for the fishery investment set out in the relevant Spanish programmes for objectives 1 and 5a.

In addition, Spain is eligible to benefit from certain payments relating to third country fishery agreements, although we do not currently have detailed information about the allocation between member states.

Elements of European Community financial assistance to the Spanish fishing industry (fisheries guidance only)

Year	*Mecu*	*£m*
1992[1]	11.20	7.93
1993[1]	12.80	10.06
1994	154.13	119.07
1995	165.28	133.41
1996	175.92	146.11
1997	186.92	155.25
1998	201.64	167.48

[1] Figures exclude fisheries guidance expenditure on redeployment, adaption and modernisation of fishing vessels, and restructuring of small scale fishing as well as fish marketing and processing awards under EC regulation 355/77, the majority of which were paid prior to 1994 and financed under the agriculture guidance fund.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

R. *v.* Field and Ghiassi

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what was the cost to public funds of the case R. *v.* Field and Ghiassi, at Liverpool Crown court in respect of which the defendants were acquitted on 22 May. [27192]

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is too early to say how much has been spent from public funds in respect of the prosecution and the defence of this case. Costs to the legal

aid fund and to the prosecution will not be known until final bills have been submitted. It is not possible to identify separately the cost to the Court Service.

Hale *v.* Wilson Dyer Gough

Mr. Steen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams of 5 May regarding the case of Hale *v.* Wilson Dyer Gough. [27357]

Mr. John M. Taylor: A reply was sent to the hon. Member on 25 May.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, when the judgment will be given in the case of Hale *v.* Wilson Dyer Gough; and if he will make a statement. [27356]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from Michael Huebner to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 6 June 1995:

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your Question about the judgment in the case of Hale v Wilson Dyer Gough. I can confirm that judgement in respect of the hearing on 28 November 1994 has now been given. A copy of the judgment has been sent, by first class post, to the solicitor for both parties today.

Mr. Steen: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what steps are being taken to recover for public funds the legal aid funds made available to the Wilson Dyer Goughs, following the withdrawal of their legal aid certificate. [27358]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The administration of the civil legal aid scheme is the responsibility of the Legal Aid Board. In cases where the board has a right to recovery, the board's debt recovery unit takes such steps as are appropriate and justified, after the amount owed to the legal aid fund has been established.

EDUCATION

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list those sales involving surplus land and property in which her Department has inserted a clause in the sale contract allowing her Department to obtain a share of any future development gain; and if she will make a statement. [26321]

Mr. Boswell: All land and property occupied by the Department forms part of the civil estate and is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Assisted Places

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what studies have been conducted on the educational effect on schools of losing students to other schools under the assisted places scheme. [26430]

Mr. Robin Squire: There have been a number of independent studies on the assisted places scheme which caters for about 1 per cent. of the total secondary school population in England. None of the studies has demonstrated any significant adverse effect on educational provision in maintained schools which assisted pupils might otherwise have attended. On the contrary, the scheme helps to promote academic standards, choice and diversity; and it is the responsibility of maintained schools to seek the highest educational standards from and for their pupils.

Retired Teachers

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will investigate the reasons behind changes in the numbers of teachers retiring on the grounds of infirmity. [26723]

Mr. Robin Squire: No. Teachers themselves take the initiative in applying for ill health retirement. It is granted if they submit satisfactory medical evidence to the Teachers Pensions Agency. Any detailed investigation into the reasons why teachers apply for ill health retirement would require specialist medical research into the background to each case. That would be expensive and, given the average of likely causes and the diverse nature of the teaching force, would probably not reach firm conclusions.

Social Development Summit

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she intends to issue a report on the implications for the United Kingdom of the commitment to the goals of universal and equitable access to education agreed at the world summit for social development in Copenhagen in March. [26761]

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend has no plans to do so.

Engineering Degree Course Funding

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals exist to extend engineering levels of course funding to apply to building services engineering degree courses in order to recognise the special laboratory and equipment needs; and if she will make a statement. [26769]

Mr. Boswell: Funding for courses is a matter for the Higher Education Council for England and I am asking the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

School Quality

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she will issue proposals for the improvement of the quality of schools in low-income communities in conformity with the declaration and action programme agreed at the world summit for social development in Copenhagen in March. [26762]

Mr. Forth: Following on from the introduction of the national curriculum, the inspection cycle and performance tables, my right hon. Friend announced on 25 May a comprehensive programme of measures designed to improve the quality of schools throughout the country.

Teachers (Sexual Offences)

Mrs. Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how long it takes to have a name added to list 99 after conviction of a person for child abuse. [26753]

Mr. Forth: The time taken varies. Under the Education (Teachers) Regulations 1993 the person concerned must be given an opportunity to make representations, and each case must be considered on its individual merits. My right hon. Friend is consulting on an amendment to the

regulations which would enable those convicted of sexual offences against children under 16 years of age to be barred from teaching as soon as the conviction is notified.

Nursery Education Vouchers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the names of those organisations that have made representations to her favouring the introduction of vouchers for nursery education. [27108]

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Education gave to the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) on 7 February, *Official Report,* columns *145–49* The concept of a voucher scheme was among the wide range of issues mentioned by the organisations listed there, and by others subsequently.

Pre-school Education

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Eduction, pursuant to her answer of 18 May, *Official Report,* columns *307–308,* what definition of participation in education by under-fives was used in the calculation of the figures shown in the answer. [26563]

Mr. Forth: The under-fives participation rates, for which the United Kingdom rate was 53 per cent., were based upon the number of pupils in schools who were aged three and four at 31 December in the 1991–92 academic year expressed as a percentage of the population aged three and four at that date. The UK rate of 68 per cent., also for 1991–92, quoted by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education in her reply of 23 May, *Official Report,* column *691,* was higher because, as requested, those aged five were also included.

In both cases, children attending playgroups or other forms of day care provision only, but not school, were excluded. International comparisons of nursery school provision only or of publicly funded provision only are not available. Both answers therefore covered pupils in all types of schools whether public or private.

Free School Meals

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals in each year since 1989 in Hampshire, Dorset, West Sussex, East Sussex and Wiltshire.

Mr. Robin Squire: The available information is shown in the table. Information prior to 1993 is not available on a comparable basis.

Percentage of pupils in maintained schools who are known to be eligible for free school meals

LEA area	*Position in January each year*	
	1993	*1994*
Hampshire	14	15
Dorset	9	10
West Sussex	12	13
East Sussex	19	21
Wiltshire	13	13

University Teachers

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the change in earnings in real terms for university teachers since 1986; and what is the actual average change for all occupations. [26534]

Mr. Boswell: Between April 1986 and April 1994, university lecturers' pay rose by approximately 16 per cent. in real terms, and actual pay for all occupations increased on average by £155 per week, a real term increase of approximately 18 per cent. as measured by the new earnings survey.

School Expenditure

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list each school in Northamptonshire for which capital spending approval has been granted in each year since 1987–88 together with the sum approved. [26372]

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not held centrally. It is for local education authorities to decide how capital resources are used for individual county and voluntary-controlled schools.

Grants for Education Support and Training

Mr. Steinberg: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 19 April, *Official Report,* column *171,* what is the average GEST funding for *(a)* local education authorities and *(b)* grant-maintained (i) primary schools, (ii) secondary schools and (iii) special schools.

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not available for local education authorities' maintained schools. GEST funding for LEAs is not allocated by different types of school.

For grant-maintained schools, GEST activities are supported through the payment of a special purpose grant development. The calculation and payment of a special purpose grants is now the responsibility of the Funding Agency for Schools and I have asked the chairman of the funding agency to write to the hon. Member.

School Tests

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what were the projected annual costs of assessing pupils of too low an academic standard to take the formal tests; and what have been the actual costs. [25958]

Mr. Forth: The projected and actual printing and distribution costs of the national curriculum tasks for less able pupils are as follows:

£000

	Projected 1994–95	*Actual 1994–95*
7-Year-olds	138.4	135.3
11-Year-olds	390.0	379.5
14-Year-olds	185.0	167.6
Totals	712.4	682.4

The costs of developing the tasks are not separately identifiable.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how much the total projected cost of funding supply cover during standard assessment test was (i) nationally and (ii) in Nottinghamshire schools for *(a)* seven-year-olds and *(b)* 11-year-olds. [25944]

Mr. Forth: The projected costs for supply cover for teachers administering the national curriculum tests to seven-year-olds and tasks to seven and 11-year-olds are as follows:

(i) (a) around £11 million (b) around £4 million
(ii) (a) around £250,000 (b) around £90,000

Each local education authority is responsible for apportioning its total allocation to its schools.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what has been the actual cost of funding supply cover during standard assessment tests (i) nationally and (ii) in Nottinghamshire schools for *(a)* seven-year-olds and *(b)* 11-year-olds. [25945]

Mr. Forth: This information is not available. Final figures on actual expenditure are not available until after the end of the financial year when the Department receives an audit certificate from local education authorities confirming expenditure for that year.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total amount that has been accepted in Government grants by schools to subsidise the cost of standard assessment tests. [25959]

Mr. Forth: This information is not available at present. Under the GEST programme, allocations are made to LEAs. Under GEST grant 2 for 1995–96, LEAs have accepted £15.3 million expenditure for supply cover of which 60 per cent. is payable in Government grant.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total amount that has been offered in Government grants to subsidise the cost of standard assessment tests. [25957]

Mr. Forth: The Department will provide about £9 million—60 per cent.— of the estimated £15 million needed for supply cover to support teachers administering the national curriculum tests to seven-year-olds and tasks to seven, 11 and 14-year-olds.

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of her Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set.

Mr. Boswell: The Department has recently completed a review of its procedures for dealing with letters from members of the public. Enhanced performance targets are being set whereby 75 per cent. of all letters from members of the public should be responded to in three weeks and 100 per cent. in four weeks. Appropriate procedures for monitoring these new targets are currently being considered.

Requests for general information are handled by a dedicated public inquiry unit. This unit aims to answer all letters within one week of receipt. In 1994, over 92 per cent. of replies met this target.

The Department's switchboard operators have a target of answering 80 per cent. of calls within 20 seconds and 90 per cent. within 30 seconds. Performance is monitored on a monthly basis through automated call logging software. During 1994, 90 per cent. of calls were answered within 20 seconds, with 92 per cent. being answered within 30 seconds.

Mathematics Standards

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received about declining standards of mathematics in schools. [23155]

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend receives such representations from time to time. Among the actions taken to improve mathematics standards in schools has been the introduction of the national curriculum and its assessment. The revised curriculum, which takes effect in schools from September 1995, will contribute further to raising standards by increasing the emphasis on basic arithmetic skills.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Water Main Installations

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what water main installations have taken place in the constituency of South Down since 1 April 1990 to 31 March 1995, and of these, what road reinstatements have taken place. [25324]

Mr. Ancram: The water main schemes completed or under way between 1 April 1990 and 31 March 1995, and the road reinstatement position are as follows:

Water Main scheme	*Road reinstatement position*
Rathfriland Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Attical Supply Area	Permanent reinstatement complete
Mayobridge Area Distribution	Permanent reinstatement complete
Deechommed Distribution Improvements	Permanent reinstatement complete
Dromore Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Newcastle Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
St. Patrick's Road Raholp Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Oldtown Lane Annalong Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Church Road Ballynahinch Duplication of Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Seaforde Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Drumaroad Hill, Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Auglisnafin Road Dundrum Duplication of Watermain	Permanent reinstatement complete
Downpatrick Road Crossgar Watermains Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Pillar Hill Ballynahinch Reinforcement of Distribution System	Permanent reinstatement complete
A24 Replacement Watermain	Permanent reinstatement complete
Pound Lane Downpatrick Watermains Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Castleward Road Strangford Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
St. Patrick's Raholp Stage 2 Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Hillhead Outlet Main Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete

Water Main scheme	*Road reinstatement position*
Carnreagh Road Guiness Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Coilly Hill Road Killyeagh Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Crawfordstown Road Drumaness Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Stewarts Road Annalong Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Anthony's Road Ballymartin Watermain Extension	Permanent reinstatement complete
Crossgar Road, Ballynahinch Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Tullykin Road, Killyeagh Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Hamiltons Folly Area Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Derryboye Road, Derryboye Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Ardtole Road, Ardglass Watermain Replace and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Ballykine Replacement Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Bannaghan Road, Raholp Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Guiness Road, Hamiltons Folly Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Manse Road, Raffrey Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Middle Road, Saintfield Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Ringhaddy Road, Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Roughal Park, Downpatrick Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
St. Patrick's Raholp Stage 3 Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Tullybrannigan ST Outlet Main Replacement Outlet Main	Permanent reinstatement complete
Killyleagh Road, Darragh Cross Watermain Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement complete
Audleystown Road Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement complete
Rathfriland to Ballyroney Trunk Main	Permanent reinstatement under way
Knock Area Distribution Improvements	Permanent reinstatement under way
Dromore Road, High Street, Lisburn St. Ballynahinch. Replacement and Upgrade (Scheme underway)	Permanent reinstatement almost complete
Dromore Road, Grove Road, Ballynahinch Watermain Replacement	Permanent reinstatement almost complete
Dundrum SR Outlet Main Replacement and Upgrade	Permanent reinstatement under way
Fofanny to Rathfriland Trunk Main	Temporary reinstatement complete
Knock to Tullymurry Trunk Main	Temporary reinstatement complete
Castlewellan Town Centre Mains Replacement	Temporary reinstatement complete
Ballymacarn Road, Ballynahinch Watermain Replacement (Scheme underway)	Temporary reinstatement complete
Ballymaglave Road, Ballynahinch Watermain Replacement (Scheme underway)	Temporary reinstatement complete
Downpatrick Road, Ballynahinch Watermain Replacement (Scheme underway)	Temporary reinstatement complete
Downpatrick Town Centre Watermain Improvements (Scheme underway)	Temporary reinstatement complete
Ballyroney to Deechommed Trunk Main (Scheme underway)	Temporary reinstatement under way
Fofanny Area Distribution Improvements (Scheme underway)	Temporary reinstatement under way

In addition, various works for repairs and small diameter mains replacements have been undertaken. Information on these is not held centrally and would be available only at disproportionate cost.

Contracting Out

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what work has been contracted out *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* by agencies for which his Department is responsible in (i) 1993–94, (ii) 1994–95 and (iii) projected for 1995–96. [25660]

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

		Work contracted out
(a) Departments		
Environment	1993–94	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland Catering Services.
		Road Surface Dressing Work
	1994–95	General Road Maintenance Activities
Health and Social Services	1993–94	ICL MainFrame Computer Services
Northern Ireland Office	1993–94	Maintenance of Hillsborough Castle Grounds
		Courier Service, Stormont Castle
		Prison Office Catering
		Services at four Prison Establishments, young Offenders Centre and the Prison Service College
		Air Charter
		Ministerial cars
	1994–95	Hillsborough Castle Estate Management
		Hillsborough Castle Facilities Management
		Key Persons Protection Scheme
		Air Charter
		Ministerial cars
		Office cleaning

		Work contracted out
Northern Ireland Office *cont.*	1995–96	Air Charter Ministerial cars Office cleaning Security Civilian search arrangements
(b) Agencies		
Child Support Agency	1993–94	Facilities Management Catering Typing Telephonists Receptionists Cleaning Security Post-Opening Messengerial Porterage Handyman
	1994–95	In addition to the services contracted out in 1993–94 the following services have also been contracted out: Reprographic Stationery Store Off-Site File Store
	1995–96	It is proposed that the services contracted out in 19934–94 and 1994–95 will also be contracted out in 1995–96
Compensation agency	1994–95	Prior options study

In 1995–96, a number of work areas in the Northern Ireland Departments and agencies are being market tested but is not known if this will result in any work being contracted out.

Staff

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, (1) what changes there have been in the number of staff in employment by grade in (i) the Northern Ireland Office and (ii) each agency for which the Northern Ireland Office is responsible in *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96; [25424]

(2) what changes there have been in the number of staff employed by *(a)* his office and *(b)* each agency for which his office is responsible in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96; [25557]

(3) how many staff of *(a)* the Northern Ireland Office and *(b)* agencies for which the Northern Ireland Office is responsible were employed on a casual or short-term basis in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25502]

Sir John Wheeler: The numbers of permanent and casual staff employed by the Northern Ireland Office and each of its executive agencies in 1993–94, projected outturn for 1994–95 and plans for 1995–96 are published in "Northern Ireland Ependiture Plans and Priorities", copy of which is available in the Library of the House. No projections broken down by grade are available.

Abortion

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the Government expect to take a decision on the recommendations made by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights pertaining to the abortion law in Northern Ireland. [23571]

Mr. Ancram: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Moss) to my hon. Friend the Member for Blaby (Mr. Robathan) on 24 May, *Official Report*, column 627.

Consultants

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the level of expenditure on consultancy by *(a)* his office and *(b)* agencies for which his office is responsible for (i) 1993–94, (ii) 1994–95 and (iii) projected for 1995–96. [25646]

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

	1993–94 Outturn £	*1994–95 Outturn* £	*1995–96 Estimate* £
Compensation Agency	2,055	355	1,000
Northern Ireland Prison Service	n/a	n/a	36,000
Rest of Northern Ireland Office	164,364	382,764	68,000
Total	166,419	383,119	105,000

Note:
The Northern Ireland Prison Service did not become an agency until 1 April 1995.

Local Government Employees

Mr. Clifford Forsythe: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the public service offices, other than local government offices, and the number of persons employed in such offices in *(a)* Antrim borough council and *(b)* Magherafelt district council in (i) January 1992, (ii) January 1993, (iii) January 1994 and (iv) January 1995. [25400]

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

Office	*January 1992*	*January 1993*	*January 1994*	*January 1995*
(a) Antrim Borough Council				
Department of the Environment				
Caulside, New Lodge Road, Antrim[1]	9	9	9	9
Ferrard, Railway Street, Antrim[1]	5	5	4	5
Church Street, Antrim[1]	3	4	8	nil
Fountain Street, Antrim[1]	2	2	2	2
Steeple Road Industrial Estate, Antrim[1]	25	26	18	19
Crown Buildings, Castle Street, Antrim	nil	nil	nil	8
Roads Service, Station Road, Antrim	44	43	42	37
Water Executive, Steeple Road Industrial Estate, Antrim	44	38	37	36
Department of Economic Development				
Training and Employment Agency, Antrim	15	16	18	18
Industrial Development Board, Regional Office	4	5	5	nil

Office	January 1992	January 1993	January 1994	January 1995
Department of Finance and Personnel				
Antrim Social Security Office	nil	nil	nil	1
Department of Health and Social Security				
Antrim Social Security Office	93	100	94	87
Contribution Unit, North Area (based in Antrim SSO)	11	16	16	17
Child Support Agency, Antrim	—	—	6	7
Department of Agriculture				
Crown Buildings, Castle Street, Antrim	5	6	6	6
Forest Office, Slemish Forest	7	7	7	6
Greenmount College of Agriculture and	106	106	105	99
Horticulture, Antrim[1]	51	52	46	42
(b) Magherafelt District Council				
Department of the Environment				
Section Office, Station Road, Magherafelt[1]	7	10	10	6
Crown Buildings, Station Road, Magherafelt[1]	nil	nil	11	10
Queens Avenue, Magherafelt[1]	nil	nil	nil	8
Magherafelt District Council, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt[1]	nil	nil	nil	1
Water Executive, Station Road, Magherafelt	41	40	38	34
Roads Service, Station Road, Magherafelt	41	40	38	34
Department of Economic Development				
Training and Employment Agency, Magherafelt	14	15	15	14
Training Unit, Castledawson	2	nil	nil	nil
Department of Health and Social Services				
Magherafelt, Social Security Office	77	79	73	76
Department of Agriculture				
Rainey Street, Magherafelt	16	17	17	18
Forest Office, Derrynoyd	8	9	11	11

[1] Figures apply to non-industrial staff in months of April.

Inward Investment

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the location of the inward investment projects promoted by the Industrial Development Board between 1 April 1990 and 31 March 1995 indicating the financial amounts in respect of each project. [25926]

Mr. Ancram: The inward investment projects secured by the IDB between 1 April 1990 and 31 March 1995 are set out. The 1994–95 figures do not include three investments for which formal announcements have still to be agreed with the companies. These investments total £16.8 million against which £5.8 million has been offered to secure 415 jobs.

Inward Investment Projects: 1990 to 1995

Company Name Country of Ownership Location in NI Product	New Jobs	Assistance (£000)	Investment (£000)
1990–91			
G C McKeown & Co (NI) Ltd ROI Antrim Computer Software	39	465	1,152
Webtech (NI) Ltd ROI Enniskillen Flexible Packaging	63	867	2,571
National Inspection Council Quality Assurance Ltd GB Ballymena Certification and Registration of Company Management Systems	7	30	87
Avery Label (Northern Ireland) Ltd GB Belfast Self-Adhesive Labels	12	161	595
Delwyn Enterprises T/A Yardmaster, International France Draperstown Metal Garden Sheds	22	206	718
Inland Revenue GB Belfast	410	none	not known
Her Majesty's Customs and Excise GB Newry	100	none	not known
Child Support Agency GB Belfast	500	none	not known
1991–92			
Vision Information Consulting Ltd ROI Belfast Design and Development of Software	32	90	317
Audio Processing Technology Ltd GB Belfast Establishment of a Facility for a Music Coding System	12	114	441
The Prudential Assurance Co Ltd GB Belfast Transfer and Processing of Life Assurance Claims	36	227	812
Royal Mail GB Belfast	300	none	not known

Inward Investment Projects: 1990 to 1995

Company Name *Country of Ownership* *Location in NI* *Product*	*New Jobs*	*Assistance (£000)*	*Investment (£000)*
Customs and Excise GB Londonderry and Enniskillen	40	none	not known
Chambernet GB Belfast	3	none	not known
Mari Group GB Belfast	7	none	not known
1992–93			
Fulcrum Communications Ltd GB Antrim Maintenance and Repair of Telecom Equipment	60	821	2,107
Fruit of the Loom Manufacturing Co Ltd USA Londonderry Textile Products	409	9,895	38,000
CFM Group Ltd GB Establishment of a Data Centre and Software Centre	150	3,018	7,533
Daesung Circuits Ltd Republic of S Korea Ballymena Printed Circuit Boards	120	2,020	4,954
Pan European Textiles Ltd Indonesia Antrim Manufacture of Micro Denier Fabrics	500	14,085	51,109
Polystar (Ireland) Ltd ROI Omagh Phenolic and Polyurethane Insulation Products	25	200	577
McKechnie (UK) Ltd GB Newtownard Fuel Line Components	21	303	896
AVM Telecom Ltd GB Londonderry Customised Software	19	139	531
Seagate Technology (Ireland) USA Londonderry Magnetic Recording Components	506	20,003	60,852

Inward Investment Projects: 1990 to 1995

Company Name *Country of Ownership* *Location in NI* *Product*	*New Jobs*	*Assistance (£000)*	*Investment (£000)*
Norfil Indonesia Antrim Micro Denier Filament Yarn	100	none	not known
1993–94			
CCA Electronic Ltd. Republic of South Korea Dungannon In Car Entertainment Systems	257	4,360	9,460
The Training & Business Group (Overseas) Ltd. GB Newry Training and Employment Service	29	150	312
BCO Technologies (Northern Ireland) Ltd. USA West Belfast Silicon Wafer Products and Services	347	6,581	15,139
CFM Group Ltd. GB Belfast and Whiteabbey Data and Software Operations	70	1,198	5,820
Charles Bell (1963) Ltd. ROI Belfast Window Blinds	10	130	425
Valence Technology BVIO USA Mallusk Batteries	660	25,625	147,200
MKF (United Kingdom) Ltd. Germany Newry PVC Film	100	2,815	10,440
Seagate Technology (Ireland) USA Londonderry Magnetic recording components	46	1,581	3,514
Benelux Manufacturing (NI) Ltd. Hong Kong Limavady CD jewel boxes	314	10,440	36,600
Daewoo Electronics UK Ltd. Republic of Korea Antrim Deck mechanisms	250	5,960	17,000

Inward Investment Projects: 1990 to 1995

Company Name *Country of Ownership* *Location in NI* *Product*	*New Jobs*	*Assistance (£000)*	*Investment (£000)*
CIS Data Ltd. Taiwan Belfast Floppy Discs	212	4,739	12,954
1994–95			
Transtec Foundries Ltd. GB Campsie Die Casting for the automotive industry	181	4,518	14,946
ABC Laboratories (Europe) Ltd. USA Coleraine Contract Laboratory Services	60	1,085	2,937
Daehwa Metal (UK) Ltd South Korea Antrim Metal Parts for Electronics Industry	240	2,928	7,004
Real Software (NI) Ltd Belgium Antrim Software Design and Support	9	138	310
Daewoo Electro Components UK Ltd. South Korea Carrickfergus Electronic Tuners	255	3,816	9,218
Radix Telecom Ltd. South Korea Craigavon Satellite Video Receivers	509	4,676	19,084
Seagate Technology (Ireland) USA Londonderry Magnetic Recording Components	300	11,200	60,026

Irish Sea (Conservation)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment has been made of the implications of the proposals in respect of the designation of special areas of conservation in the fishing grounds of the Irish sea. [25925]

Mr. Ancram: Two sites on the Irish sea have been proposed as qualifying for designation as special areas of conservation under the EU habitats directive, at Murlough and Strangford lough.

There will be no practical implications for fishing interests arising from the designation of Murlough.

Strangford lough has been selected because of its internationally important marine life. The Department is content that the proposed designation of Strangford lough will not have any implications for the fishing industry apart from those imposed through the regulation of fishing and fish farming by the Department of Agriculture, and those arising from the proposed designation of the lough as a marine nature reserve.

Local Government Wards

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the 55 electoral wards which have now been designated. [25933]

Mr. Ancram: Northern Ireland has a total of 582 local government wards. These were last designated following a review of local government ward boundaries in 1992. It is not clear which of these designated wards comprise the 55 to which the hon. Gentleman refers.

Public Bodies

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland following the report prepared by Gray and Heenan of the University of Ulster in relation to the system of public appointments in Northern Ireland, what action he will take to make the system more open, accessible and accountable; and if he will make a statement. [25943]

Sir John Wheeler: The system of appointments to public bodies in Northern Ireland is already open and accessible in that any member of the public can apply to have his or her name included on the central database which is maintained to assist Departments identify suitable people for appointments. The Government plan to make publicly available in the near future their guidelines to the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments on public appointments procedures.

Public bodies are accountable to Ministers, who in turn are answerable to Parliament for the degree of independence, the usefulness, effectiveness and efficiency of non-departmental public bodies. With regard to financial accountability of public bodies, the Government are accountable to the Public Accounts Committee for their expenditure on these bodies, and they for their part are required to submit to proper audit.

Sinn Fein (Benefits)

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many of the representatives of Sinn Fein who are currently engaged in talks with Her Majesty's Government are currently in receipt of state financial benefits. [26509]

Mr. Moss: Responsibility for the subject in question has been delegated to the Social Security Agency under its chief executive, Mr. Alec Wylie. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Alec Wylie to Mr. David Wilshire, dated 24 May 1995:

I have been asked to reply to your recent question about members of Sinn Fein.

I should first explain that information on a person's entitlement to social security benefits, including whether or not they are claiming or getting benefit, is confidential. I am therefore unable to comment on individual cases. However, I can assure you that all claims to benefit are assessed and regularly reviewed by independent adjudication officers, strictly in accordance with social security law and payment is made only where there is valid entitlement.

I hope this letter sets out the position for you.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what external legal advice has been received in respect of parliamentary approval for the payment of practice management expenses by GP fundholders. [27017]

Mr. Moss: No external legal advice has been received. My Department's legal advisers are at present considering what, if any, action needs to be taken on this matter in Northern Ireland. I shall write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as the position has been clarified.

Metal-framed Windows

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much the Housing Executive's recent plan to replace metal window frames with wooden frames on a needs only basis has cost; how much it is anticipated the full replacement course will cost; and for what reasons the scheme was upgraded from needs only to a full replacement programme. [27359]

Mr. Moss: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, but I have been advised by the chief executive that the Executive adopted a policy to replace all metal-framed windows with wooden frames over a five-year period, in April 1994. Prior to this, metal-framed windows were replaced on a needs only basis, but information about how much the Housing Executive expended in this connection is not available. It is estimated that the full replacement course will cost £30 million over the five-year period. The reasons for the change in policy were the age and condition of the metal framed windows and the concerns expressed by tenants.

Myalgic Encephalomyelitis

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many sufferers of myalgic encephalomyelitis there are in Northern Ireland; and what proposals there are to provide a specialist clinic for ME patients. [27360]

Mr. Moss: The number of people in Northern Ireland currently diagnosed as having myalgic encephalomyelitis, a condition being increasingly referred to as chronic fatigue syndrome, is not known. There are no proposals at present to establish a ME clinic in Northern Ireland.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Translation Facilities

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chairman of the Information Committee what facilities are available for translating proceedings of the House in Committee Rooms and in the Chamber from English into other languages.

Mr. Waller: Equipment, including interpreter booths, which enable simultaneous translation from English into other languages, can be provided for use in committee rooms. The Chamber is equipped with a single-channel system which enables simultaneous translation from English to one other language to be provided for up to 24 visitors in the Galleries.

PRIME MINISTER

VJ Day

Dr. Godman: To ask the Prime Minister if he will re-define VJ day as VP day, victory in the Pacific; and if he will make a statement. [26157]

The Prime Minister: No.

Churchill Papers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister on which occasions the Churchill papers were offered for sale to the Government. [26843]

The Prime Minister: I cannot answer for previous Administrations. A formal offer of sale was made by the current trustees in 1991.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will instruct the national heritage fund to put the Churchill papers up for public tender without reservation. [26846]

The Prime Minister: No. The papers which constitute the Churchill archive are now the property of the Sir Winston Churchill archive trust, a charitable trust set up for the purpose of preserving the archive intact for the nation.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what consideration he gave when deciding whether the Official Secrets Acts covered the Churchill papers in the case of Peter Wright; and if he will make a statement. [26862]

The Prime Minister: The case to which the hon. Member refers has little or no relevance to the question of the applicability of the Official Secrets Acts to the Churchill papers.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if the national heritage fund is free to sell private papers acquired from the Churchill family; and what evidence he has as to their current market value, taking into account the copyright provisions. [26861]

The Prime Minister: The private papers sold by the Churchill family were bought on behalf of the specially constituted Sir Winston Churchill archive trust through the money allocated from the heritage lottery fund by the national heritage memorial fund. The only way the trust could dispose of the papers would be with the consent of the trustees of the national heritage memorial fund. As trustees of a charitable trust, they may not, in any case, dispose of the permanent endowment of the trust without the consent of the Charity Commissioners or of the courts. The independent advice on the value of the papers which the national heritage memorial fund received took into account the intended arrangements as to copyright ownership.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister (1) if he will take impartial professional advice as to the open market value, subject to the existing restrictions on copyright, of the private papers purchased by the national heritage fund from the Churchill family; [26867]

(2) what account was taken of the value of the copyright when estimating the amount which might have been paid by purchasers of the Churchill memoirs. [27340]

The Prime Minister: The independent advice on the value of the papers which the national heritage memorial fund received took into account the intended arrangements as to copyright ownership.

Ministers's Official Broadcasts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister if drafts of Ministers' official broadcasts are classified as official papers. [26844]

The Prime Minister: If such drafts are created or acquired by Ministers by virtue of their office, they would be official papers.

Living Standards

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Prime Minister what is his policy in respect of the state funding improvements in individuals living standards in old age. [26901]

The Prime Minister: Our policy on pensions remains unchanged. We will maintain the value of the basic state pension by increasing it in line with prices, encourage personal responsibility for additional pension provision through occupational and personal pensions and target extra resources on those with low incomes.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Prime Minister what provisions his Department has made to ensure that accommodation designed to provide care and support for vulnerable residents and those at risk, is fully covered under the proposed changes to housing benefit. [26537]

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Security has recently received the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee following its public consultation on the proposed changes to housing benefit. He will be considering carefully the position of sheltered and supported housing under the changes as part of the response to the report.

Ministerial Documents

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister what classes of document relating directly or indirectly to the performance by Ministers and officials of their duties are still regarded as state papers which cannot be sold for personal gain by Ministers and officials. [26532]

The Prime Minister: Papers which are created or acquired by Ministers or officials, or other Crown servants, by virtue of the office they hold under, or in their service to, the Crown, are regarded as state papers which should not be sold for personal gain.

I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 4 May 1995, *Official Report*, columns *281–82* in respect of the convention relating to papers taken away by Prime Ministers on leaving office.

Local Education Authorities

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 25 April, *Official Report*, column *65*, where in the current edition of "Social Trends" can be found the information that education authorities employ two administrators for every three teachers; and if he will make a statement. [26897]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher), on 27 April, *Official Report*, column *613*.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Retirements and Redundancies

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many people in *(a)* the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and *(b)* agencies for which the FCO is responsible (i) took early retirement, (ii) took voluntary redundancy, (iii) took compulsory redundancy and (iv) were retired on medical grounds in (1) 1993–94 and (2) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25481]

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

	Early retirement	*Voluntary redundancy*	*Compulsory redundancy*	*Medical retirement*
1993–94	63	30	0	13
1994–95	134	52	0	14
1995–96	69	7	[1]40	1

[1] Of these 40 redundancies it is not possible at this stage to state whether they will be voluntary or compulsory.

Overseas Development Administration and the Natural Resources Institute

	Early retirement	*Voluntary redundancy*	*Compulsory redundancy*	*Medical retirement*
1993–94	5	0	0	5
1994–95	2	0	49	4
1995–96	3	[1]186	0	2

[1] This includes 130 targeted voluntary redundancies from the Natural Resources Institute.

GCHQ

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the implications for security arising out of privatising individual services at GCHQ. [26454]

Mr. Hurd: GCHQ has used outside contractors on sensitive work in the past and the plan to contract certain logistic and engineering services to outside companies does not introduce any new security dimension. The procedures for security vetting announced in the House by the Prime Minister on 15 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *764–66*, will be applied by GCHQ as in Government generally so that we can be assured of the reliability of the personnel of the successful tendering company.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to what extent the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment Regulations) 1981 would apply to employees transferred under programmes of privatisation at GCHQ. [26456]

Mr. Hurd: If the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment Regulations) 1981 are deemed to apply, any employees transferred to a contractor would retain their existing contracts of employment. Any subsequent change to the contracts would be a matter for negotiation between the contractor and employees concerned. If there is no transfer of undertakings in accordance with these regulations, any employees leaving GCHQ as a result of outsourcing would have their existing contracts terminated on redundancy grounds, with payment of appropriate compensation. It would be for the contractor

to decide whether to recruit any ex-GCHQ staff and what their terms of employment should be.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what proposals he has for the privatisation of individual services at GCHQ; [26453]

(2) to what extent privatisation of individual services at GCHQ will include contracts for employees providing *(a)* greater and *(b)* reduced employment rights relative to those enjoyed by existing GCHQ directly employed staff. [26455]

Mr. Hurd: None. In accordance with Government White Papers concerning the Government sector providing value for money, on 23 March 1995 the director of GCHQ announced proposals to outsource GCHQ's logistics and engineering services. There are no plans for further outsourcing at the moment.

Government of Sudan

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions the Government of Sudan have breached the ceasefire negotiated in that country by President Carter; and what assessment he has made of the consequences of these breaches. [27327]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Despite violations by all sides, the two-month ceasefire agreed on 28 March helped to reduce military activity in southern Sudan, and to facilitate the Carter Centre Guinea Worm campaign. We welcome the decision of the Sudanese Government, and at least one southern faction, to extend the ceasefire to late July.

East Timor

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 December 1994 to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn), *Official Report*, column *172*, what were the reasons for the two Jakarta embassy staff visits to East Timor in May 1993; and why it was necessary to make two separate visits in that month. [27347]

Mr. Goodlad: The visits were made to attend sessions of the trial of the fretilin leader, Xanana Gusmao.

HEALTH

NHS Staff Breaks

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures are in place to ensure that NHS staff receive statutory breaks. [25930]

Mr. Malone: Staff management matters, such as the observance of statutory breaks in the working day, are the responsibility of employing authorities and national health service trusts as autonomous employers. Like other employers, they are expected to observe any statutory requirements.

GP Referrals

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information her Department has on the extent of the referral of patients to accident and emergency departments by *(a)* fundholding practices and *(b)* non-fundholding practices; and what differences there are between *(a)* and *(b)*. [26283]

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a list of the contracts for hospital and health services awarded so far under the competitive tendering process by each NHS trust in England. [26071]

Mr. Sackville: A list of contracts for clinical services awarded after competitive tender by national health service trusts in England from 1 April 1993, as notified to the NHS executive's market-testing database, will be placed in the Library.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which national health service trusts have formed commercial companies; how many trusts have set up joint businesses with private companies; what guidelines regulate such activity; and if she will make a statement. [25314]

Mr. Sackville: Guidance to national health service trusts on the setting up of companies limited by share or guarantee is given in TEL (93)4, copies of which are available in the Library, and in the NHS trusts finance manual. We are aware that Hillingdon NHS trust has been involved in setting up a private limited company. Guidance on joint venture arrangements is given in FDL(93)3, FDL (93)33 and FDL (93)61, copies of which are available in the Library. Information on NHS trusts which have entered into joint venture arrangements is not available centrally.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what advice she gives to NHS trusts concerning the advisability of purchasing without prior planning permission, property proposed to be used for medical purposes including out-patient treatment. [26954]

Mr. Sackville: Guidance to national health service trusts about land and property matters was given in the Estatecode series, in a document entitled "Property Transactions-a Management Guide for NHS Trusts". This was distributed with EPL (94)36, and copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the notional value she has assigned to the capital assets of the Newham Healthcare NHS Trust for each year since its inception, together with the related 6 per cent., or less, payment she has received; what reduction in asset value she would expect from the sale of St. Andrews hospital, Bromley-by-Bow; and what is the likely reduction such a sale would make in the annual payments mentioned above. [26383]

Mr. Sackville: The NHS executive has received no proposals for the sale of St. Andrews hospital, Bromley-by-Bow. The actual value of the net relevant assets which comprise the originating capital debt of the Newham Healthcare national health service trust at 1 April 1994 is given in Statutory Instrument 1995 No. 407 dated 20 February 1995 and is £37,777,298. Information on the current value of individual trust assets is not held centrally. One of the core financial duties of a trust is to make a 6 per cent. return on the average value of its net relevant assets in any year, but this is not paid to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The actual return achieved by the trust in 1994–95 will be reported in its

annual accounts for the year which will be available following audit no later than 30 September 1995.

GP Lists

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been struck off the registers of *(a)* fundholding general practitioners and *(b)* non-fundholding general practitioners in the latest year for which figures are available. [26118]

Mr. Malone: Information held centrally on patients removed from general practitioner lists does not identify the fundholding status of the general practitioner.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients have been struck off the registers of general practitioners in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available. [26119]

Mr. Malone: The information requested is available centrally only for 1992–93. The number of patients removed from registers at the request of general practitioners in 1992–93 was 78,993.

Mr. Nicholas Brown : To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many patients were struck off general practitioners' lists in each regional health authority during the last year for which figures are available. [26107]

Mr. Malone: The information is available for 1992–93 and is shown in the table.

Region	*Patients removed from GP list at request of GP*
Northern	3,318
Yorkshire	7,108
Trent	5,608
East Anglia	1,827
North West Thames	10,508
North East Thames	13,916
South East Thames	5,689
South West Thames	3,463
Wessex	1,392
Oxford	2,547
South West	2,186
West Midlands	10,798
Mersey	4,556
North West	6,077
England	78,993

Note:
Patients who die, emigrate, opt to register with another GP or are transferred on resignation or death of GP are not included in the above figures.

Pay

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been carried out into the effect of offering identical staff differing rates of pay, both within the same organisation and between differing organisations. [26198]

Mr. Malone: None.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what studies have been undertaken by her Department into the effect of widening the gap between the pay of NHS managers and the pay of clinicians; what are the principal conclusions of the studies; and if she will make a statement. [26209]

Mr. Malone: None. Pay needs to be set at levels sufficient to recruit, retain and motivate staff of appropriate calibre, with the right skills, and within resources available.

Mental Health

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department has, within the last year, published an operational definition of serious mental illness to offer guidance to purchasers and providers on patients who should be prioritised for mental health services. [26074]

Mr. Bowis: We have not published a prescriptive definition of severe mental illness.

We issued for consultation in October 1994 a "Draft Guide to Arrangements for Inter-agency Working for the Care and Protection of Severely Mentally Ill People". The draft guide contains a framework definition of severe mental illness on which local services can base their own more detailed operational definitions. Copies of the draft are available in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many mentally ill people having come before a court with an offence punishable by imprisonment have been subject to a section 37 hospital order under the Mental Health Act 1983 for each year since 1989. [26645]

Mr. Bowis: The number of admissions to hospital under section 37 is published in the statistical bulletin "In-Patients Formally Detained in Hospitals Under The Mental Health Act 1983 and Other Legislation, England: 1987–88 to 1992–93", ISBN 1 85839 380 9. Copies of the bulletin are available in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made as to the number of mentally ill people who are currently homeless. [26650]

Mr. Bowis: Homelessness legislation and criteria for rehousing are matters for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Healthy Eating

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list her Department's projects aimed at promoting healthy eating indicating the cost of each project her Department. [26299]

Mr. Sackville: The Government's nutrition task force published "Eat Well!", its programme of action for achieving the diet and nutrition targets of "The Health of the Nation", in March 1994, copies of which are available in the Library. Project teams are now taking forward the priorities of the programme and responsibility for the secretariat is shared by the Department of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The programme involves a wide range of interests—Government Departments, food producers, caterers, retailers, educators, the Health Education Authority, the national health service, health professionals and consumers—whose costs cannot be identified separately and not all of which fall on the Government. Direct costs to the Government are small and are not identifiable.

The Department of Health has contributed from the section 64 general scheme to the funding of the following projects to promote healthy eating in line with the diet and nutrition targets:

*"Get Cooking!"—£60,000 over 1992–93 and 1993–94 to the National Food Alliance—which aims to encourage children to learn basic cooking skills;

*"Shopping for A Healthy Diet on A Low Income"—£15,000 in 1993–94 to the National Food Alliance—which produced a resource for people working with low-income families;

*"The Nutrition of Older People"—£10,000 in 1993–94 to the Caroline Walker Trust—which is aimed at producing nutritional guidelines for those providing food for older people.

This is complemented and underpinned by the Health Education Authority's nutrition programme—£500,000 in 1995–96.

Emergency Calls and Admissions

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* emergency calls to ambulance service, *(b)* admissions were made to casualty departments and *(c)* admissions were made to hospital from casualty in total and in each region in each of the last five years. [26316]

Mr. Sackville: Information on the number of emergency calls to ambulance services is published annually in a booklet entitled "Patient Transport Services, Summary information from form KA34", copies of which are available in the Library. Since 1992–93, this has been recorded as the total number of emergency calls resulting in an ambulance arriving at the scene of an incident, that is, discounting abortive calls.

Information on the number of finished consultant episodes in the speciality of accident and emergency medicine is published annually in "Ordinary and day case admissions for England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Information on the estimated number of finished consultant episodes, emergency admissions from accident and emergency departments, England 1989–90 to 1993–94 is shown in the table:

Regional Health Authority	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Northern	101,159	100,733	103,912	110,392	113,116
Yorkshire	126,076	129,280	128,297	143,564	153,771
Trent	117,932	126,296	127,196	141,947	147,826
East Anglian	47,244	43,806	40,635	41,665	45,691
North West Thames	143,858	139,284	145,579	153,433	144,304
North East Thames	226,545	224,045	221,837	237,882	243,064
South East Thames	163,144	161,494	164,113	163,048	167,180
South West Thames	121,935	124,283	131,916	129,729	143,344
Wessex	73,248	73,927	65,654	72,626	80,244
Oxford	67,044	61,184	62,543	61,041	65,419
South Western	81,995	85,592	85,843	87,596	92,172
West Midlands	144,125	150,689	150,981	163,616	183,665
Mersey	112,182	115,335	141,349	146,929	163,780
North Western	183,880	185,278	197,107	195,442	203,107
SHAs	19,504	14,085	15,402	14,189	16,679
England	1,729,873	1,735,311	1,782,366	1,863,100	1,963,361

Source:
Hospital Episode Statistics—estimate from 25 per cent. sample.

Health and Social Services Care Programme

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were subject to a health and social services care programme for each regional health authority for each year since 1991. [26646]

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Ebola Virus

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what discussions are being held with the World Health Organisation on the subject of controlling the spread of the Ebola virus; and if she will make a statement. [26677]

Mr. Malone: My officials met officials from the World Health Organisation on 10 May 1995 following the first report earlier that day of the outbreak of viral haemorrhagic fever due to Ebola virus in Zaire, to obtain information about the outbreak and its extent, and the measures being taken to identify the cause and control the spread of infection. They have been in regular contact since then. The outbreak was confirmed by WHO on 11 May.

On 11 May, the chief medical officer informed all directors of public health about the outbreak and provided extensive advice, copied to consultants in communicable disease, about Ebola virus infection and the measures required to manage any suspected cases and control the spread of infection. Information and advice was sent by the public health laboratory service on the same day to consultants in communicable disease control, regional epidemiologists and its laboratory directors.

On 12 May, updated information and advice was sent to consultants in communicable disease and copied to port health authority medical officers and directors of public health.

Further information and advice were distributed on 18 and 19 May. The distribution list was extended to include sea and airport authorities and infectious disease physicians. Directors of public health were asked to cascade the information to general practitioners, accident and emergency departments and nurses working in the community.

There has been no case of Ebola virus infection in the United Kingdom since the outbreak in Zaire was reported.

Dental Amalgam

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is issued to dentists in the handling and use of mercury amalgam; and if this guidance has changed since 1979. [26674]

Mr. Malone: Guidance on the handling and use of dental amalgam is primarily a professional matter for dentists. Guidance on the handling and use of mercury has been given by the British Dental Association in 1989, taking account of guidance note EH 17 "Mercury and Safety Precautions", 1977, and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1988. The COSSH document is available in the Library, and copies of guidance note EH 17 will be placed in the Library.

Private Medical Services (Advertising)

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what guidance is issued to NHS trust managers concerning the advertisement of private hospitals and private health insurance within NHS establishments. [26678]

Mr. Sackville: None.

Professor Hudson

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) who authorised the dismissal of Professor Hudson from the board of St. Bartholomew's hospital; and under what powers; [26984]

(2) if she will make a statement on the reasons for the dismissal of Professor Hudson from the board of St. Bartholomew's hospital. [26983]

Mr. Malone: Professor Hudson has never been a member of the Royal Hospitals NHS trust board and therefore was not dismissed. He has attended board meetings, on an ex-officio basis, as chairman of the St. Bartholomew's medical council.

Hospital Building Projects

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the major hospital building projects in Buckinghamshire completed since 1978–79 or now under construction or planned giving, in each case, the completion date and the amount of public money spent, expressed both in cash terms and in terms of today's prices. [26968]

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the tables.

Completed Schemes

Project/scheme	*Completion date*	*Cash* £	*At May 1995 prices* £
Amersham—Dermatology Unit	21st January 1994	2,581,694	3,013,872
Amersham Operating Theatres	24th June 1983	1,333,653	1,767,090
Amersham Phase 1	22nd July 1991	6,193,487	6,896,109
Buckingham—Phase 1	16th February 1990	1,263,502	1,488,125
Milton Keynes DGH—End Unit	24th September 1992	1,202,638	1,350,420
Milton Keynes DgH MI Unit	24th November 1988	2,495,264	3,005,659
Milton Keynes DGH—OPD	13th November 1989	3,578,463	4,035,288
Milton Keynes DGH—Phase 1	12th September 1983	15,638,544	18,837,337
Milton Keynes DGH—Phase 2	21st August 1991	17,810,043	20,083,666
St. Johns EMI	11th March 1991	1,816,779	1,738,074
Stoke Mandeville—Maternity Unit	5th May 1991	6,030,648	5,769,392
Stoke Mandeville—OPD/Hospice	18th July 1989	1,598,049	1,841,230
Stoke Mandeville—Pathology	5th May 1989	1,545,574	1,820,343
Stoke Mandeville X-ray	10th July 1987	1,287,006	1,593,722
Tindal MI Development	7th May 1991	3,831,237	3,275,090
Tweed Drive—Nursing Home	17th November 1989	1,224,958	1,143,007
Wycombe Pathology	5th July 1985	1,314,300	1,698,973
Wycombe—X-Ray Extensions and Alterations	16th September 1994	2,074,436	2,400,548
Milton Keynes—Secure Unit Phase 2	14th February 1995	1,913,847	2,101,217
Totals		74,739,122	83,859,162

DGH—District General Hospital EMI—Elderly Mentally Infirm
OPD—Out Patients Department
MI—Mental Illness

Scheme under construction

Project/scheme	*Forecast completion date*	*Estimated public expenditure*[1] £
Aylesbury Manor House Rehabilitation Unit	30 June 1995	1,300,000

Planned scheme

Project/scheme	*Forecast completion date*	*Estimated public expenditure*[1]
Stoke Mandeville Redevelopment	1 February 1999	£23,560,000

This scheme has received full business case approval and is planned to start from 2 December 1995.

Note:

Information is not available for schemes before 1980.

[1] Includes construction costs, fees and equipment. Information is not available centrally on total costs for schemes. For example, VAT and land purchase costs are excluded.

Secure Residential Care

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will add the police to the list of those persons the local authority must notify before a child is placed in secure residential care under the Arrangements for Placement of Children (General) Regulations 1991, regulation 5. [26903]

Mr. Bowis: I remain to be convinced that this would be right, given that many children in secure accommodation are not offenders.

Correspondence

Mrs. Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will now respond to the letter of 17 March from Roger and Michelle Gould regarding the medical treatment of their son Jo, their letters of 5 April and 17 April or the letter of 3 May from the hon. Member for Lewisham, East. [26910]

Mr. Sackville: I replied on 24 May.

Stillbirths and Deaths (Inquiry)

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many mattresses were examined in compiling the CESDI report; and how many of them had been used before. [26946]

Mr. Sackville: I understand that the results of the study, undertaken on behalf of the confidential enquiry into stillbirths and deaths in infancy and reported recently in *The Lancet*, are still being analysed and the researchers do not wish to release further information until the analysis is complete.

British Fluoridation Society

Mr. Sykes: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money from public funds the British Fluoridation Society has received in each year since it was established. [26904]

Mr. Malone: The table gives details of public funds allocated to the British Fluoridation Society by the Department of Health and the Health Education Authority since 1974. Additional funding has been provided by the Scottish Office, Welsh Office and Northern Ireland

DHSS. Information relating to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales and my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

British Fluoridation Society: Amount of public funding for the period from 1973 to 1995

Year	DOH £	HEA £
1973–74	nil	15,356
1974–75	nil	nil
1975–76	4,500	nil
1976–77	5,500	nil
1977–78	5,500	500
1978–79	5,500	nil
1979–80	5,500	nil
1980–81	11,000	nil
1981–82	14,000	nil
1982–83	15,000	nil
1983–84	15,000	nil
1984–85	15,000	5,500
1985–86	30,000	10,000
1986–87	20,000	15,000
1987–88	20,000	13,000
1988–89	30,000	20,977
1989–90	31,000	11,574
1990–91	45,784	3,284
1991–92	51,491	nil
1992–93	56,000	nil
1993–94	62,247	nil
1994–95	63,000	nil

Source:
British Fluoridation Society
DOH—Department of Health
HEA—Health Education Authority
Note:
In 1987 the Health Education Council changed its name to the Health Education Authority.

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those sales involving surplus land and property in which her Department has inserted a clause in the sale contract allowing her Department to obtain a share of any future development gain; and if she will make a statement. [26324]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally as decisions of this kind are managed at local level.

Health authorities follow Government procedures for the disposal of surplus land—DAO(GEN)13/92—which advise in appropriate circumstances a clawback provision allowing the authority to obtain a share of any increase in value arising from the grant of planning permission in the future.

Health Authority Resources

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will give the reasons for changes she proposes in the system of weighted capitation of expenditure on purchase of health care, or treatment, by district health authorities for the year 1996–97; what options for additional sums to be paid to them have been considered; from where they will come; and by what date representations should be received concerning her proposals. [26384]

Mr. Sackville: The principle of resource allocation to health authorities is weighted capitation and a modified formula was announced in October 1994 following a major review. The modified formula will be used as the basis of allocations to health authorities, subject to the enactment of the Health Authorities Bill, in 1996–97.

The formula is kept under continuous review in the light of comments from health authorities and others and some possible refinements are currently under consideration. Changes to the formula are self-financing: they increase the weighted population share of some health authorities and reduce that of others.

Staff and Patient Ratios

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the average staffing ratio for patients with hospital orders for manslaughter. [26094]

Mr. Bowis: The information is not available centrally, but the ratio will depend on each individual unit's operational policy and may vary with the number and mix of patients in the unit.

Fostering Regulations

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library full copies of all the responses received to the local authority social services letter (95)4. [26632]

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Stockport (Ms Coffey) on 2 May, column *181*. I expect to receive a summary shortly.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *409* (1) if she will specify the total number of practice managers employed by general practitioner fundholders in each year between 1 April 1991 and 1995; and what was the total number of managers' support staff; [27141]

(2) if she will give the aggregate level of general practitioner fundholders' practice managers' salaries costs which are deemed to have been unlawful between 1 April 1991 and 1995. [27142]

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Charges

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the annual cost of abolishing NHS charges presently made for eye and dental checks.

Mr. Malone *[pursuant to his reply, 6 March 1995, c. 49]:* I regret that there was an error in my previous reply.

The annual cost at 1993–94 prices for dental examinations, assuming that the removal of the charge led to no increase in the number of dental examinations, should read approximately £60 million and not £70 million as previously quoted.

TRANSPORT

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list those sales involving surplus land and property in which his Department has inserted a clause in the sale contract allowing his Department to obtain a share of any future development gain; and if he will make a statement. [26323]

Mr. Watts: This information can be provided only at disproportionate cost. Land which has potential for development will normally be sold with the benefit of planning permission. However, there will be cases where, in the light of professional advice it is decided that there are good reasons to dispose of surplus land or property with development potential without first obtaining appropriate planning permission, for example because it would take unusually long to establish the planning position. In such cases, in accordance with Treasury guidance, my Department considers the possibility of including in the terms of conveyance a clawback clause allowing it to share in any future development gain.

Catamaran Passenger Craft

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the evacuation times of all high-speed catamaran passenger craft operating from United Kingdom ports. [26429]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 6 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the evacuation times of all high speed catamaran passenger craft operating from United Kingdom ports.

Evacuation times range from 9 to 16 minutes and are therefore within the maximum allowable time of 17 minutes 40 seconds as required by the Code of Safety for High Speed Craft.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations led him not to publish the evacuation trials on high-speed catamaran passenger craft. [26431]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 6 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your further Question about publishing evacuation trials on high speed catamaran passenger craft.

As part of its comprehensive approval, survey and inspection procedures, the Agency conducts or oversees a number of tests and trials to ensure that seagoing crafts of all types meet national and international safety standards, including evacuation requirements. There are no plans to publish the results of particular tests or trials, other than in the context of serious deficiencies where a ship is detained.

Newbury Bypass

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made by the Highways Agency in reviewing the options for the Newbury bypass; what reports, including draft and preliminary reports, have been submitted by the Highways Agency to him; and when he will publish the contents of these reports. [26937]

Mr. Watts: Substantial progress has been made by the Highways Agency in its review of this scheme. The Secretary of State has received preliminary findings on certain aspects of the review. Further work by the agency is required before its final report is submitted. For this reason, it is not appropriate to publish the preliminary papers.

Biodiesel

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what research he has commissioned into the effects of converting road transport to burn biodiesel from crops; and if he will make a statement; [27091]

(2) what research he has commissioned into the impact on atmospheric pollution of converting road vehicles to burn biodiesel from crops; and if he will make a statement. [27092]

Mr. Norris: In 1993, a bus run on biodiesel by Reading Buses was emissions tested by the Transport Research Laboratory. The conclusion of this work was announced in the answer by my right hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) to the hon. Member for Dartford (Mr. Dunn) on 21 October 1993, *Official Report*, column *298*. Biodiesel is included in the current collaborative programme of trials of a range of alternative fuels announced by my hon. Friend the Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key) to the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Mr. Lidington) on 21 March 1994, *Official Report*, column *9*.

Railway Equipment Breakdowns

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many breakdowns of *(a)* rail track, *(b)* signalling equipment, *(c)* overhead lines and *(d)* other equipment and infrastructure occurred of (i) a major and (ii) a minor nature on the rail network in each year since 1970. [27152]

Mr. Watts: Railtrack advises me that this information is not held centrally and that it would involve a disproportionate cost to attempt to collect it.

Integrated Public Transport

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of expenditure on integrated public transport and road schemes in the current year, indicating its percentage of the total transport budget; and what were the corresponding figures for each of the last 10 years. [27156]

Mr. Norris: There is no generally accepted definition of an integrated public transport and road scheme. It is not therefore possible to provide this information in the form requested.

Railway Investment

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is the level of railway investment in each EU country in the last year for which figures are available, calculated in sterling at current exchange rates; and what are those levels of railway investment per kilometre of rail track; [27155]

(2) what was the level of railways investment per head of the population in each EU country calculated in sterling at current exchange rates, in each of the last 20 years; and if he will list these levels of investment expressed as an index where the United Kingdom rail investment equals 100. [27154]

Mr. Watts: The information available is published in "Statistical Trends in Transport 1965–1989", prepared by the European conference of Ministers of Transport. Copies will be placed in the Library in due course.

Pedestrian Casualties

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he will publish the Transport Research Laboratory's report on pedestrian casualty rates among children. [26763]

Mr. Norris: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Newcastle under Lyme (Mrs. Golding) on 1 May 1995, *Official Report*, column *61*.

Gliders

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the effect of glider flights on grazing animals. [26938]

Mr. Norris: None.

Transport Supplementary Grants

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what plans he has to extend transport supplementary grant bids to expenditure on transport packages; [27193]

(2) what progress he has made in implementing recommendation 42 of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's 18th report on transport and the environment. [27194]

Mr. Norris: Section 88(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 restricts the payment of transport supplementary grant in England to expenditure in connection with highways or the regulation of traffic. In order to provide greater flexibility for local authorities to switch resources between different types of expenditure, it was agreed with the local authority associations that works costing less than £2 million within transport package bids would be funded through supplementary credit approvals. The borrowing costs associated with the use of SCAs are reflected in the calculation of local authorities' entitlement to revenue support grant.

We are still considering whether any change to the existing legislative framework, as suggested by the royal commission, is needed.

Vehicle Owner Details

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are taken to ensure that the tracing facility relating to the disclosure of names and addresses of vehicle owners to organisations showing good cause for disclosure is not abused; what percentage of requests for disclosure have been refused over the last year; if he will list the tracing agencies using Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency data for tracing purposes; and if he will make a statement. [26410]

Mr. Norris: Individual written requests for personal details of vehicle keepers from the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency's vehicle record are vetted prior to processing. One and a half million were received during the last 12 months. Two per cent. were rejected.

Five million requests from the police, local authorities and other approved organisations using a bulk inquiry facility were processed during the same period. These organisations, with the exception of the police, are bound by agreements with DVLA to provide facilities to enable the agency to check that only bona fide requests are made.

A list of organisations submitting written inquiries is not available. Arrangements have been made for a complete list of bulk inquiries to be lodged in the Library of the House.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many disclosures of names and addresses of vehicle owners there were from Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency vehicle owner indexes over the last 12 months; how many of these were made to *(a)* the police, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* organisations showing good cause for disclosure; and if he will make a statement. [26409]

Mr. Norris: Approximately 6.5 million requests for the names and addresses of vehicle keepers were processed by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency during the period April 1994 to March 1995. The majority originated from the police and local authorities. Detailed statistics are not available.

Aircraft Emergency Medical Equipment

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the emergency medical equipment that has to be carried on all scheduled flights by British-registered aircraft. [26508]

Mr. Norris: The Air Navigation Order 1995 requires all UK registered aircraft to carry first aid equipment of good quality, sufficient in quantity, having regard to the number of persons on board the aircraft, and including the following:

Roller bandages, triangular bandages, adhesive plaster, absorbent gauze, cotton wool (or wound dressings in place of the absorbent gauze and cotton wool), burn dressings, safety pins;

Haemostatic bandages or tourniquets, scissors;

Antiseptic, analgesic and stimulant drugs;

Splints, in the case of aeroplanes the maximum total weight authorised of which exceeds 5,700 kg;

A handbook on first aid.

Channel Tunnel Rail Link

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the membership of the tender adjudication steering group that considered the bids for the construction of the channel rail link. [26574]

Mr. Watts: The steering group comprises officials from the Department of Transport and the other Government Departments concerned, together with senior representatives from the companies providing advice to the Department on the project.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the subsidy from public funds that will be required to ensure the completion of the channel tunnel rail link. [26451]

Mr. Watts: The precise amount of public sector support which the Government will make available for this project will depend on the outcome of the competition currently under way to select a private sector promoter. We anticipate that the contribution will be substantial.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce the name of the successful bidder for the channel rail link construction contract. [26575]

Mr. Watts: The Government intend to make an announcement towards the end of this year.

Motorways

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which sections of motorways in each county currently have traffic levels which exceed on average 75,000 vehicles per day; and which sections of motorways in each county are expected to have such traffic levels by the year 2000. [26311]

Mr. Watts: The table lists the motorway sections in each county which, in 1994, has an estimated annual average daily traffic level—for both directions in total—of more than 75,000 vehicles. This information is derived from the national traffic census.

Forecasts of traffic flows on individual sections of motorway are not made as a matter of routine.

Motorway links with average daily traffic levels of more than 75,000 vehicles in 1994

County[1]	Road	Start junction	End junction
Greater London	M1	4	A411
	M25	29	30
	M4	1	4B
	A102M	A102	A2
	A40M	M41	A404
Greater Manchester	M6	24	25
	M6	26	27
	M62	12	14
	M62	15	M61(1)
	M62	15	21
	M63	3	4
	M63	6	9
	M63	10	A560
	M63	12	13
	M63	A560	A5145
	M56	3	6
	M61	1	2
South Yorkshire	M1	31	35A
West Midlands	M5	M6(8)	1
	M5	1	2
	M6	4A	9
	M6	10	10A
	A38M	A4400	M6(6)
	M42	6	7
West Yorkshire	M62	25	27
	M62	27	A62
	M62	30	31
	M621	M62	A62
	A58M	A660	A66
Tyne and Wear	A167M	A186	A187
Avon	M4	19	20
	M5	17	19
	M32	1	2
Bedfordshire	M1	10	13
Berkshire	M4	4B	6
	M4	7	11
Buckinghamshire	M1	13	15
	M25	15	17
	M40	1A	4
Cheshire	M6	16	23
	M6	M56(9)	20
	M62	10	12
	M56	6	7
	M56	9	10
Derbyshire	M1	24	26
	M1	27	29
	M1	30	31
Essex	M25	25	29
Hampshire	M27	3	4
	M27	5	8
	M27	11	12
	M27	M275	A27
	M3	5	6
Hereford and Worchester	M5	4	M42(4A)
	M5	M42(4A)	5
	M42	2	3
Hertfordshire	M1	A411	5
	M1	9	10
	M25	17	25
Kent	M20	5	6
	M25	2	5
Lancashire	M6	30	32
Northamptonshire	M1	15	17
Nottinghamshire	M1	26	27
Oxfordshire	M40	9	10
Staffordshire	M6	10A	16
Surrey	M25	5	15
	M23	7	9
	M23	9	10
	M3	2	3
	M3	3	4
Warwickshire	M6	2	4
	M42	3	3A
	M42	5	6

[1] Where motorway links cross county boundaries the link has been assigned to the county in which the traffic count was carried out.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons his Department will not consider installing acoustic fencing on motorways that have been completed. [26361]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 6 June 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for what reasons his Department will not consider installing acoustic fencing on motorways that have been completed.

As I explained in answer to your earlier question, presented in the Official Report dated 9 May, column 351, it is not the Agency's policy to apply mitigation to existing roads. The statutory duty to provide noise reduction measures applies only to those new roads or improved roads opened since 17 October 1969. Owners of residential properties in the vicinity of these trunk roads and motorways will have had the opportunity of being considered for noise insulation and of claiming compensation for consequential loss of value of their property under the Land Compensation Act 1973.

Any compensation provided under the Land Compensation Act 1973 will have taken account of the noise levels at affected properties, allowing where appropriate for the contribution of noise mitigation measures included as part of the scheme. We do not provide any further noise mitigation once compensation has been settled since this would incur double counting.

I trust this explains the reason for it not being possible to consider installing acoustic fencing on motorways that have been completed.

Lead Monitoring

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what continuous monitoring of blood lead levels in children is carried out by his Department; and if he will publish the reports for the last three years for which information is available. [26605]

Mr. Norris: Monitoring of levels of lead in children is a matter for the Department of Health. However, I understand that monitoring programmes have shown a continuing fall in blood lead levels. This is in part due to the Government's successful policy of encouraging the use of unleaded petrol.

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what policy and procedure exist for dealing with complaints against his Department by members of the public; when his Department last updated its policy; what time limit and target for dealing with such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedure exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint; [26214]

(2) what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26230]

Mr. Norris: In June 1994 the Department launched the "Serving the Public" initiative, developed in response to the citizens charter and designed to improve its service to the public when answering letters, taking telephone calls and handling complaints. Departmental standards and procedures are contained in a leaflet "Serving the Public".

There is a target of 15 working days for responding to letters and complaints from the public. A correspondence monitoring system has been put in place across the Central Transport Group to measure performance. Results for the first quarter of 1995 show that 91.5 per cent. were answered within the 15-day target.

The Department is also currently working on methods of monitoring telephone performance across the whole central transport group. Performance figures for 1994 show that 95 per cent. of all calls to the Department's public inquiry unit were answered within 15 seconds.

The Department has recently reviewed its complaints handling procedures and is currently finalising details to provide for independent arbitration where complainants are not satisfied with the departmental response.

Local Road Safety Schemes

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the allocation of funding for local road safety schemes in real and constant terms for *(a)* 1995–96, *(b)* 1996–97 and 1997–98. [26172]

Mr. Norris: Some £50 million is allocated to local safety schemes in 1995–96. This is programmed to rise to £55 million in 1996–97 and £60 million in 1997–98. Based on the latest estimate of the GDP deflator, the figures—in 1995–96 prices—amount to £50 million in 1995–96, £53.66 million in 1996–97 and £57.25 million in 1997–98.

Angel Junction

Mr. Chris Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he intends to release or dispose of the properties owned by his Department at 353–359 Goswell road, London EC1. [25964]

Mr. Watts: The Highways Agency will shortly be commissioning a study of the Angel junction to consider modest improvements, recognising the importance of striking an appropriate balance between safety, the environment and the needs of all road users, including pedestrians.

The results of the study will be known in about six months and a decision about the release or disposal of 353–359 Goswell road will be taken shortly afterwards. Meanwhile, steps are being taken to ensure the properties are weathertight and secure.

Buses

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what powers are available to traffic commissioners to restrict the routes and number of vehicles operating on local bus routes. [25908]

Mr. Norris: Powers are available to traffic commissioners under section 7 of the Transport Act 1985 whereby they may determine traffic regulation conditions to regulate, inter alia, the routes of services and to limit the number of vehicles which may be used in the provision of a local service.

Commissioners may determine traffic regulation conditions only at the request of a traffic authority and only if satisfied that such conditions are required in order to prevent danger to road users or reduce severe traffic congestion.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by traffic area office the number of staff employed specifically on bus monitoring and the number of hours spent on this task for each of the last 12 months. [25909]

Mr. Norris: The only staff employed specifically by traffic area offices on this task are casual—often retired staff—working part time. These are used to varying degrees depending on local arrangements. Precise staff numbers and the breakdown of hours spent per month are not easily available, but the total annual number of hours by all staff, including permanent traffic area office and vehicle inspectorate staff, in 1994–95 is given.

Annual number of hours worked on bus monitoring by each traffic area

Traffic area office	*Total number of hours 1994–95*
North Eastern (Leeds)	740
North Western (Manchester	525
West Midland (Birmingham)	900
Eastern (Cambridge)	257
South Wales (Cardiff)	840
Western (Bristol)	398
South Eastern & Metropolitan (Eastbourne)	0
Scottish (Edinburgh)	936
Total	4,596

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action *(a)* his Department and *(b)* the north-eastern traffic commissioner have taken in respect of predatory behaviour by bus companies in Darlington. [25910]

Mr. Norris: It is not for the Department to take action in respect of predatory behaviour by bus companies. Anti-competitive conduct is a matter for the competition authorities.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the penalties available to traffic commissioners for dealing with public service vehicle operators who fail to operate local bus services in a proper manner. [25913]

Mr. Norris: The penalties are set out in sections 26 and 111 of the Transport Act 1985. In summary, they are as follows:

A traffic commissioner may attach to the operator's licence a condition prohibiting the operator from using vehicles under the licence to provide any local service of a description specified in the condition or one prohibiting him from so using vehicles to provide local services of any description.

A traffic commissioner may make a determination that an operator has failed to operate a local service as registered and notify the Secretary of State accordingly. The Secretary of State will then reduce by 20 per cent. any fuel duty rebate payable to the operator for the previous 3 months in respect of all his local service operations.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by traffic area for each of the last five years the number of staff employed in sections dealing with the registration of local bus services and public service vehicle operator licensing. [25914]

Mr. Norris: The numbers of staff years in each of the last five years were:

Traffic Area Office: Staff working in PSV and bus registration sections

	1990–91	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
North Eastern (Newcastle)	1.20	—	—	—	—
North Eastern (Leeds)	7.90	8.36	9.74	9.71	8.20
North Western (Manchester)	8.50	9.78	11.14	10.54	10.80
West Midlands (Birmingham)	5.20	5.21	5.79	5.38	4.68
Eastern (Nottingham)	3.60	—	—	—	—
Eastern (Cambridge)	4.10	6.80	5.99	4.58	4.86
South Wales (Cardiff)	3.60	3.82	4.82	4.63	3.61
Western (Bristol)	5.50	7.84	8.19	7.30	7.01
Metropolitan (London)	4.90	0.31	—	—	—
South Eastern and Metropolitan (Eastbourne)	3.40	6.11	5.56	5.93	5.71
Scottish (Edinburgh)	7.50	8.39	9.15	9.04	8.52

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the amount spent by his Department publicising the fact that members of the public can complain to traffic commissioners regarding the operation of local bus services. [25915]

Mr. Norris: No specific funds are allocated for this purpose.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what extra resources have been provided in the traffic area offices to deal with the new regulations relating to the registration of local bus services; and what assessment he has made of the additional resources required. [25917]

Mr. Norris: No additional resources have been provided to traffic area offices. The Department's assessment is that the resources currently available will be sufficient to deal with enforcement of the new regulations.

Traffic Regulation Conditions

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list by traffic area office for each of the last five years the traffic regulation conditions imposed by traffic commissioners indicating the reasons for their imposition. [25916]

Mr. Norris: The information requested is given in the table.

Traffic regulation conditions imposed since 1990

Traffic area	*Locality*	*Reason*
1990		
NWTA	Oldham Several roads in Shaw	Danger to the public
1991		
NWTA	Trafford Ayres Road and Henrietta St Restricted size of vehicle to no more than 7.04 m in length and 2.21 m in width	Severe congestion and danger to the public
1992		
NWTA	Bolton Glengarth Drive	Severe congestion and danger to the public
NETA	Sheffield Various central streets and part of Ecclesall Rd	Severe congestion
NETA	Barnsley Kendray St and Pontefract Rd	Severe congestion
1993		
SCOT TA	Edinburgh St. Andrew's Sq, South St. Davids St and York Place Waiting times at bus stops controlled	Severe congestion

Traffic regulation conditions imposed since 1990

Traffic area	*Locality*	*Reason*
NWTA	Liverpool Sir Thomas St (part), Victoria St (part), Whitechapel, Crosshall St, Hood St, Roe St Brythen St, Dawson St ie area known locally as the Gyratory	Danger to the public and severe congestion
1994		
NETA	Sheffield Church St and part of High Street No new registrations will be accepted on this route	Severe congestion
WMTA	Birmingham Priory Queensway, Corporation St, Lower New St, St. Martins Circus, Hill St, Paradise St, Dale End, Upper Bull Street Waiting times at bus stops controlled	Severe congestion
1995		
NWTA	Manchester Wilmslow Road between Willowbank and Old Hall Lane, Fallowfield Waiting times at bus stops controlled and use of bus stops restricted to buses on specified services	Severe congestion

Staff

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what changes there have been in the number of staff employed by grade in *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each agency for which his Department is responsible in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96; [25556]

(2) what changes there have been in the number staff in employment by grade in *(a)* his Department and *(b)* each agency for which his Department is responsible in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25631]

Mr. Norris: The numbers of staff—permanent and casual—employed by my Department, and each of its executive agencies, in 1993–94, projected outturn for 1994–95, and plans for 1995–96 are published in my Department's annual report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many posts were lost in *(a)* the Department of Transport and *(b)* agencies for which the Department of Transport is responsible, listing the total lost posts by agency in (i) 1993–94 (ii) 1994–95 and (iii) projected posts lost for 1995–96. [25070]

Mr. Norris: My Department does not keep a central record of posts. The number of staff employed by my Department and each of its executive agencies in 1993–94, the projected outturn for 1994–95 and the plan for 1995–96 are published in my Department's annual report, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Ferries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his assessment of the evacuation exercise conducted by Sally Line in Ramsgate seven years ago; and what lessons may be drawn from that exercise for plans for evacuation of ferries operating from United Kingdom ports. [24921]

Mr. Norris *[holding answer 18 May 1995]:* This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Paul Flynn dated 6 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the evacuation exercise conducted by Sally Line in Ramsgate seven years ago.

A ferry exercise "FEREX '86" was carried out from the Sally Line ferry, "THE VIKING", one mile off Broadstairs in January 1986. The exercise was arranged by the RNLI in co-operation with the Sally-Line, the Director of Naval Operations and Trade, Royal Marines Deal, RAF Manston and HMCG Dover. All agreed that FEREX '86 proved to be a most useful exercise. As a result of this operation, which was the first of its kind in UK waters, similar exercises have been conducted since, whenever the opportunity has arisen.

Consultants

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the level of expenditure on consultancy by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* agencies for which his Department is responsible for (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25650]

Mr. Norris: The figures requested are as follows:

	Department	*Agencies*
1993–94	23,016,700	[1]1,200,800
1994–95	20,956,100	[1]8,093,100
1995–96[2]	20,000,000	10,000,000

[1] The Highways Agency, Marine Safety Agency and Coastguard agency were formed 1 April 1994. Figures for these three agencies move from the Departmental figure to the agencies figure in the year 1994–95. The totals exclude expenditure by the Highways Agency on road schemes.
[2] Estimated.

Bilateral Air Service Agreements

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if the Government will undertake to impose a veto on any attempt by the European Commission to extend its authority in the field of civil aviation to include negotiations with the United States and other countries on landing rights or any other matter which is now dealt with by him direct with the countries concerned. [25380]

Mr. Norris: It is the Government's policy that member states should remain free to negotiate bilateral air service agreements, except in those cases, for example with Switzerland, where a mandate has been agreed in the Council of Ministers.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps are taken to check that the engine capacity registered for fishing vessels is accurate; whether torque meters are used to check reported capacity; and what checks are made with the engine manufacturers. [25386]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Austin Mitchell, dated 6 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the steps taken to check that the engine capacity of fishing vessels is recorded accurately. In view of the reference to torque meters I have assumed that the Question refers to engine power rather than capacity.

Vessels to be placed on the United Kingdom Register are subject to survey by a Marine Safety Agency Surveyor, or a Surveyor of one of the Classification Societies acting on behalf of the MSA. He must ensure that the information being recorded accurately reflects that vessel, since the information will subsequently be forwarded to the Registry.

The power of the engine is normally furnished by the shipbuilder who should be in possession of the engine test-bed specification as provided by the engine manufacturer. Where there are serious grounds for concern that the recorded details of engine power may no longer be accurate, then a further survey will be required to ascertain that the details are indeed correct.

Empty Dwellings

Mr. Hendry: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the total number of houses owned by his Department that have been empty for *(a)* more than six months and *(b)* more than 12 months; and what action his Department is taking to reduce the numbers. [25858]

Mr. Watts: As at the end of April 1995, my Department held 324 dwellings which had been standing empty for more than six months and a further 504 had been standing empty for more than 12 months.

Regular monitoring of the situation on empty dwellings takes place to try and ensure that tenants are found as quickly as possible for those dwellings which are vacant but lettable. We also constantly monitor all the properties in our portfolio so as to identify at the earliest possible opportunity those which are required for road schemes and therefore need to be demolished and those which can be declared surplus and sold. As at the end of April, of the 828 dwellings identified above, 250 were vacant because they were either awaiting sale or demolition.

M4

Mr. Garnier: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when the September 1993 plans for M4 improvements to junction 4B-8/9 were most recently updated; and if he will place copies of the updated plans in the Library. [25995]

Mr. Norris: The Highways Agency held public consultation in October 1993 about proposals for increasing capacity in this corridor. The responses to the consultation are still being considered in preparation for a decision by the Secretary of State on the preferred option. There has been no revision of the proposals since consultation.

Railways Investment

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what were the levels of investment in the rail network, excluding channel tunnel and European passenger services, for each year since 1970, expressed at constant 1995 prices. [27153]

Mr. Watts: The information, expressed in 1994–95 prices, is as follows:

Year	*Investment (£ million)*
1970	702
1971	746
1972	775
1973	777
1974	839
1975	969
1976	946
1977	937
1978	941
1979	967
1980	951
1981	810
1982	695
1983	767
1984–85[1]	786
1985–86	855
1986–87	819
1987–88	993
1988–89	970
1989–90	1,085
1990–91	1,009
1991–92	1,059
1992–93	1,004
1993–94	663

[1] 15-month year due to an accounting change from calendar years to financial years.

M66

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column 2, if the M66 has lighting along its entire length. [26370]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 6 June 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 15 May, Official Report, column 2, if the M66 has lighting along its entire length.

The M66 is a dual 2 lane (and in places dual 3 lane) motorway and 14 of its 16 miles are lit.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Churchill Papers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if the recently acquired Churchill papers are insured against fire or other loss. [26366]

Mr. Dorrell: This is a matter for the Sir Winston Churchill archive trust, the new owners of the papers which are housed at Churchill college, Cambridge. I understand the trustees will be meeting shortly to consider, among other things, arrangements for insurance of the papers.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *647*, on the cataloguing of the Churchill archive, if he will estimate the number of items and the percentage of the collection that are state papers. [26965]

Mr. Dorrell: The state papers in the Churchill archive are, in the main, those listed in the classes shown as "Official" in the outline catalogue which is available at Churchill college, Cambridge and at the national register of archives, Chancery lane. When the detailed catalogue, to which I referred in my rely to the hon. Member on 24 May is available it will be possible to say precisely how many items these classes comprise.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage who initiated the negotiations for the sale of Winston Churchill's private papers to the national heritage memorial fund. [26866]

Mr. Dorrell: Cambridge university and Churchill college, Cambridge submitted a lottery application to fund the purchase of the non-state papers. The papers are now the property of the Sir Winston Churchill archive trust, which was specially constituted for the purpose.

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those sales involving surplus land and property in which his Department has inserted a clause in the sale contract allowing his Department to obtain a share of any future development gain; and if he will make a statement. [26320]

Mr. Dorrell: Since its inception in 1992, neither my Department nor its agencies have been involved in the sale of any surplus land or property.

Digital Terrestrial Television

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what criteria will be used to allocate the additional channels which will become available in 1997 with the introduction of digital terrestrial television. [26576]

Mr. Dorrell: The Government are considering their policy for the introduction of digital broadcasting, including licensing and ownership questions, and will later this summer be issuing a policy document setting out their proposals.

West Midlands Arts Council

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what funding the west midlands arts council has received in each of the last five years. [25254]

Mr. Dorrell: Central Government funding for the regional arts boards is delivered through three non-departmental public bodies: the Arts Council of England, the British Film Institute, and the Crafts Council. The funding from each of these bodies for the West Midlands arts board in each of the past five years is as follows:

	Ace	*BFI*	*Crafts Council*
1990–91	2,811,908	109,250	49,000
1991–92	3,161,366	127,444	55,500
1992–93	[1]3,644,064	130,970	64,900
1993–94	3,878,697	112,292	67,200
1994–95	[2]5,588,887	130,970	73,000

[1] This figure includes £95,000 as a result of the delegation of funding responsibility to West Midlands Arts Board for clients from the Arts Council.

[2] This figure includes £1.6 million as a result of the delegation of funding responsibility to West Midlands Arts Board for four theatres in the region from the Arts Council.

Archaeological Sites

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is his Department's current expenditure devoted to the preservation of archaeological sites. [25251]

Mr. Dorrell: Setting aside expenditure on properties which are the direct responsibility of my Department and its sponsored bodies, and which will include sites of archaeological importance, my Department's resources for the preservation of archaeological sites are channelled primarily through English Heritage. In 1994–95, English Heritage spent £2.6 million on grants to owners for the preservation, maintenance and management of ancient monuments and £8 million on archaeological investigations, including excavation and preservation by record.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many archaeological sites known to his Department have been *(a)* listed and *(b)* not listed by his Department. [25250]

Mr. Dorrell: At the end of April 1995, there were 15,489 entries on the schedule of ancient monuments, representing some 22,250 individual sites. There are about 500,000 archaeological sites in England, but of these less than 10 per cent. are likely to be of national importance and therefore eligible for consideration for scheduling.

Theatre Admissions

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what discussions he has had with theatre production promoters to encourage admission for people on low incomes. [25252]

Mr. Dorrell: This subject comes up regularly in discussions with a wide variety of interlocutors. My Department, the Arts Council and regional arts boards attach a high priority to encouraging the widest possible access to the arts. To that end, the council and RABs pay particular attention to the access policies, including seat pricing arrangements, of the performing arts organisations which they support.

Channel 4

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, how Channel 4 can use or dispose of Channel 4 surpluses. [26445]

Mr. Dorrell: It is for Channel 4 to determine how it uses or disposes of its surpluses, within the terms of its remit set out in the Broadcasting Act 1990 and its licence conditions established by the Independent Television Commission.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if Channel 3 bidders indicated the expected levels of money transfers to or from Channel 4. [26443]

Mr. Dorrell: The business plans of the Channel 3 bidders are confidential to the Independent Television Commission, which was responsible for awarding the Channel 3 licences.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if Channel 4 is treated by his Department as a nationalised business. [26446]

Mr. Dorrell: Channel 4 became a self-governing statutory corporation on 1 January 1993, under the terms of the Broadcasting Act 1990.

Community Television

Mr. Barry Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he is taking to assist the development of local community television services. [26536]

Mr. Dorrell: The Broadcasting Act 1990 increased the scope for broadcasting in the UK, including opportunities for local television services delivered by cable. The introduction of digital terrestrial television services may open up further prospects. The Government intend to publish proposals for digital broadcasting this summer.

Television Productions

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much was earned in exports of television productions in the last year for which figures are available. [25257]

Mr. Dorrell: Data published by the Central Statistical Office for 1993, the latest year for which figures are available, show the overseas earnings of UK television companies as totalling £113 million. Total earnings will have been higher than this, because some of the record £236 million overseas earnings of the UK film industry for transmission rights, royalties and sales will have been generated by their television productions, but this component is not separately identifiable.

BBC

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage by what mechanisms the BBC is accountable to Government in relation to the economy and efficiency of its expenditure. [25256]

Mr. Dorrell: Responsibility for ensuring economy and efficiency falls ultimately on the BBC's governors, who are appointed by Her Majesty the Queen on the recommendation of the Prime Minister. The BBC is required by its royal charter to lay its annual report and accounts before Parliament.

Mr. Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what recent representations he has received relating to reductions in the BBC's output. [25255]

Mr. Dorrell: We regularly receive representations about the changes to the BBC's programmes and services.

National Lottery

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make a statement concerning the distribution of national lottery funds to voluntary organisations in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland. [23344]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 16 May 1995]:* The following voluntary organisations have received awards from national lottery proceeds in Strathclyde:

Voluntary organisations	£
Strathclyde	
Tobermory Centre, Island of Mull	85,000
Hopscotch Theatre Company, Glasgow	20,358
Four Acres Charitable Trust, Glasgow	9,500
The Arts is Magic, Glasgow	7,000
Bellshill and Mossend YMCA, Bellshill	37,000
Ardrossan Academicals Rugby Football Club, Ardrossan	24,000
Scotland	
Grampian Arts Hospital Trust, Elgin	14,200
The Saltire Society, Edinburgh	12,095
Plockton Village Hall, Kyle of Lochalsh	62,435
Melvin Hall Management Committee, Tarves	7,965
Haddo Arts Trust, Aberdeen	28,955
Orkney Camarata, Orkney	6,000
Pitlochry Festival Theatre, Pitlochry	7,500
MacRobert Arts Centre, Stirling	9,000
Dance Base Ltd., Edinburgh	3,875
Deeside Gliding Club, Aboyne	49,800
Loch Ness and Highland Horizons, Inverness	760,000
Northern Sports Development Trust, Shetland	45,000
Priestfield Tennis and Sports Association, Edinburgh	24,700
Jed Forest Rugby Football Club, Jedburgh	37,700
Cononbridge and Maryburgh Bowling Club, Ross and Cromarty	28,300
Highland Gliding Club, Elgin	22,000
Deeside All Weather Training Area, Banchory	40,000
Findhorn Bowling and Tennis Club, Morayshire	10,700
Stewarty Unit 558 Sea Cadet Corps, Kirkcudbright	4,500
West Linton Tennis Club, West Lothian	29,900
Corstorphine Lawn Tennis Club, Edinburgh	27,800
Hawick Bowling Club, Hawick	26,600
Loch Tay Racing Club, Kenmore	16,000
West Calder Bowling Club, West Lothian	9,606

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Contingency Budget

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the size of the Overseas Development Administration's contingency budget for each of the last five years. [25733]

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

1991–92: £70 million
1992–93: £70 million
1993–94: £70 million
1994–95: £75 million
1995–96: £68 million

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many times the ODA's contingency budget was drawn on in 1994–95; and for what purpose. [25737]

Mr. Baldry: The ODA's contingency budget was drawn on 29 times in 1994–95. It was used for the following purposes:

Aid Programme Contingency Reserve Allocations: 1994–95

Approved claims	*Amount £000*
European Investment Bank (EIB) loan defaults: 7 claims	829
Food Aid	
Rwanda	1,250
Malawi	1,440
Rwanda: (4 claims)	20,000
Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC): to cover cost of interest payments pending an amendment to the CDC Act permitting the waiving of interest charges	5,860
Financial support for the newly formed Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF)	30
Mozambique-Matola Jetties	2,250
Turks and Caicos Islands: environmental and infrastructure improvements	250
Further work on Economic and Social Research	300
Macedonia balance of payments support	2,000
Commonwealth of Learning	300
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): UK contribution to Capacity 21	647
United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA): further support for population projects	1,500
Skillshare Africa	65
Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC): increased contribution due to progress on reforms	400
Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD): finance participation of indigenous people in CSD meetings	20
British Council: to cover in-year Overseas Price Movements (OPM)	733
Bosnia	20,000
Evaluation	150
Total approved	58,024
Disaster Relief: funds earmarked at start of FY	12,000
Balance of Contingency Reserve at end of FY	4,976

Ministerial Visits

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list all projects to be visited by the Minister for Overseas Development in Indonesia. [26789]

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development visited the following projects:

Active Learning and Professional Support project
Kampung Improvement project
Flight simulator project
Samarinda Combined Cycle Power Plant project
Tropical Forestry Management project

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Minister for Overseas Development will be visiting Indonesia; what plans the Minister has to sign a concessional loan agreement and for what amount; what projects are to be funded by it; and which British-funded aid projects the Minister will visit. [26764]

Mr. Baldry: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development visited Indonesia from 22 to 26 May. She visited the following British funded aid projects:

Active Learning and Professional Support project
Flight Simulator project
Samarinda Combined Cycle Power Plant project
Tropical Forestry Management project

My right hon. and noble Friend signed a new concessional loan arrangement for £80 million. Projects to be funded under this arrangement are to be identified.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *289-94*, if he will list ATP agreements with Indonesia, concluded in 1993 and 1994, in each case specifying the same detail as in his answer and details of the Indonesian Government Departments or other Indonesian body responsible for overseeing each project. [26776]

Mr. Baldry: Concessional lending arrangements for £65 million and £80 million were signed in April 1993 and April 1994 respectively. There were no specific ATP project agreements concluded with the Government of Indonesia in 1993 and 1994.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, column *289*, if he will list in respect of each ATP project in Indonesia since 1980 the Indonesian Government Department or other Indonesian body responsible for overseeing the project. [26775]

Mr. Baldry: The table gives the Indonesia Government Department or the Indonesian body responsible for each project listed in my answer of 8 February.

Project	*Department or body responsible*
Mrica Hydro Project	Ministry of Mines and Energy
Jambu Aye Dam Study	Ministry of Mines and Energy
Ombilin Coal Mine	Ministry of Mines and Energy
AIS Submarine Cable	Ministry of Tourism Posts and Telecomms
Education Equipment Study	Directorate General of Higher Education
Jabatobek Railway Study	Ministry of Communication
Bengkulu Oil Palm Study	Ministry of Agriculture
Isolated Diesels	Ministry of Mines and Energy
Bukit Asam Rail Bridges	Ministry of Communications
Offshore Supply Vessels	Ministry of Communications
Ombilin Coal Mine Training	Ministry of Mines and Energy
Jabatobed Feasibility Study	Ministry of Communications
Railway Track Turnouts	Ministry of Communications
Steel Bridging	Ministry of Public Works (Bina Marga)
Navigational Aids	Directorate General of Sea Communications
Coal Fired Power Station Training	Ministry of Mines and Energy
Marine Diesel Engines	Ministry of Communications
Batam Island Power Develop. Study	Ministry of Mines and Energy
Bandung TV Studios	Directorate General of Radio, TV and Film
Radio Studios Rehab (ATP/TC)	Ministry of Information (DEPPEN)
Cigading Port	Pt Krakatau Steel
Radio Studios (ATP/TC)	Ministry of Information (DEPPEN)
Satellite Remote Sensing	Ministry of Tourism, Posts and Telecomms
Scattered Diesels	PLN (Indonesian Electricity Authority)
Ombilin Coal Mine I	Ministry of Mines and Energy
Citayam/Cibinong Railway	Indonesian State Railway
Cigading/Serpong Railway	Indonesian State Railways
Forestry Radios	Ministry of Forestry
Radio Studios Rehabilitation	Ministry of Information (DEPPEN)

Project	*Department or body responsible*
Shortwave radio Transmitters	Ministry of Information (DEPPEN)
Flight Simulator Consultancy	MERPATI Airlines via Directorate General of Air Communications
Western Universities Equipment	Directorate General of Higher Education
Bali/Medan Airport Security	Directorate General of Air Communications
Jambi Power Station	PLN (Indonesian Electricity Authority)
Flight Simulator	MERPATI Airlines—via Direcorate General of Air Communications
Steel Bridging II	Ministry of Public Works (Bina Marga)
Toll Road (ATP/TC)	Pt Jas Marga—the Toll Road Authority of the Government of Indonesia
Automotive Industry Study	Ministry of Industry
Western Universities Training Centre	Directorate General of Higher Education
Flight Simulator Consultancy	MERPATI Airlines—via Directorate General of Air Communications

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 28 March, *Official Report*, column *545*, whether the consultancy unit established by the Indonesian national police with the help of the Overseas Development Administration's police management training project is available to advise and assist the East Timorese police authorities if required. [26777]

Mr. Baldry: Yes.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *289–94*, in respect of the Cikampek-Padalarang toll road project agreed with Indonesia in 1991, what was the purpose of the project, the nature of the work involved in it and the equipment supplied under the project; which Indonesian companies were involved in the project; what proportion of the funding for the project related to technical co-operation; what was the nature of that technical co-operation; and who will operate the completed toll road and receive the tolls. [27353]

Mr. Baldry: We have agreed to provide a total of £16.85 million towards the cost of designing and constructing a toll road from Cikampek to Padalarang in Indonesia. Of this, £4.7 million has been provided from technical co-operation funds. It was spent on surveys, detailed design and geological investigations. The remainder will be provided as a mixed credit towards the cost of construction. Road construction is expected to start later this year. The Indonesian companies involved are PT Jasa Marga—the Indonesian Highways Corporation—and PT Citra Lamtoro Gung Persada. The toll road will be operated by a joint venture comprising these two companies and Trafalgar House Construction Ltd. to be known as PT Citra Granesha Marga Nusantara. This company will receive the tolls.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *289–94*, what was the nature of the equipment supplied under the Bali and Medan airport security aid and trade provision project concluded with Indonesia in 1991; to whom the equipment was supplied and what security function it fulfils. [27351]

Mr. Baldry: This project provided the directorate general of air communications with security and communications equipment and an associated training programme.

The purpose of the project was to reduce security risks to civil aviation in Indonesia, and so to help promote the tourist industry.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *289–94*, what is the nature of the equipment supplied under the navigational aids aid and trade provision project concluded with Indonesia in 1987; what are the functions of the equipment; to whom it was supplied; and for what purpose it is being used. [27349]

Mr. Baldry: Equipment funded under this project was supplied to the directorate general of communications. It consisted of lighthouses, lightbeacons and lightbuoys to improve safety for shipping through the islands of Indonesia as well as to extend the number of routes which could be used safely.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *289-94*, what is the nature of the equipment supplied under the satellite remote sensing aid and trade provision project concluded with Indonesia in 1989; what are the functions of the equipment; to whom it was supplied; and for what purpose it is being used. [27352]

Mr. Baldry: These funds part financed a seminar describing the applications of satellite remote sensing technology relevant to the requirements of the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry. The technology was being considered for use in the detection and monitoring of forest hazards.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much aid the Government expect to pledge to Indonesia at the forthcoming consultative group on Indonesia meeting in July; and if the Government will raise with the representatives of the Government of Indonesia at that meeting the issue of human rights and of Indonesia's occupation of East Timor. [27348]

Mr. Baldry: We are currently considering the size of the aid pledge we will announce at the consultative group in mid-July. It is expected to be about the same level as in 1994.

Human rights and East Timor are not on the agenda for the consultative group, but we shall continue to raise these issues in our frequent bilateral contacts with the Indonesian Government.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 8 February, *Official Report*, columns *289-94*, what was the nature of the equipment supplied under the isolated diesels and scattered diesels aid and trade provision projects concluded with Indonesia in *(a)* 1985 and *(b)* 1989; what were the functions of the equipment; to whom it was supplied; and for what purpose it is being used. [27350]

Mr. Baldry: The 1985 isolated diesel project consisted of the supply of 45 diesel generating sets each with a

capacity of between 5 and 6 mW. These were used to expand the generating capacity at 14 sites serving small urban centres in Indonesia.

The 1989 scattered diesels project supplied six 2.5 mW diesel generating sets to increase capacity at three sites. Both projects were implemented by the Indonesian State Electricity Authority.

Desertification

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action he will take to combat desertification in third world countries; and if he will allocate funds as part of the Overseas Development Administration's budget to such countries. [26642]

Mr. Baldry: We are providing significant resources through the aid programme to assist developing countries affected by desertification. We have signed the desertification convention and shall ratify it in due course.

Angola

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what total funds from the Government have been *(a)* pledged and *(b)* disbursed to the 1995 United Nations consolidated inter-agency appeal for Angola; and if he will make a statement. [26772]

Mr. Baldry: We have pledged £5 million in response to the 1995 appeal, of which some £2.5 million has been disbursed. We are supporting UN agencies and NGOs with assistance for seeds and tools, demining, primary health, relief supplies and logistics.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what funds the Government have *(a)* pledged and *(b)* disbursed in support of demining in Angola in each of the last three years. [26774]

Mr. Baldry: The information is as follows:

	Pledged £	*Disbursed* £
1993–94	0	0
1994–95	1,955,068	1,851,498
1995–96	0	0

World Bank

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much the United Kingdom has contributed bilaterally and within the European Union to the World bank debt reduction facility for each year since it was first implemented. [26869]

Mr. Baldry: The IDA debt reduction facility was established in 1989, with funding from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development's net income, to assist low-income countries in reducing or restructuring their commercial debts. To date, the United Kingdom has supported only one operation bilaterally, Sierra Leone, with a contribution of £3 million earlier this year. The EC contributed $4 million to the Uganda operation completed in February 1993; and is planning a contribution towards the Sierra Leone operation.

Job Creation

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of British jobs in the United Kingdom and abroad, which have been secured as a result of ODA-funded projects in the most recent period for which figures are available. [23925]

Mr. Baldry *[pursuant to his reply, 22 May, c. 397]:* The reply should have read:

"An indirect benefit of aid and the economic development that this promotes is indeed that jobs can be created in this country and abroad but there is no ready means of assessing how many or at what cost."

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Accounting Procedures

Mr. Thomason: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what measures he is taking to simplify companies' statutory accounting procedures. [27003]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: As part of the deregulation initiative we have looked hard at the accounting requirements in the Companies Act 1985. We have been helped by all the suggestions that we have received from business and others about areas where compliance is particularly difficult or expensive.

We published a consultative document on 31 May seeking views on what needs to be changed. The document contains:

50 proposals for simplification of specific Companies Act accounting disclosure requirements.

A proposal to increase by up to 50 per cent. the financial ceilings which govern whether companies are small or medium-sized for accounting purposes.

An invitation to contribute views on the level of accounting disclosure required for small companies. In particular:

(i) could the amount of information in small companies' accounts be reduced further while still satisfying the needs of users?

(ii) should shareholders in certain companies be allowed to opt out of receiving copies of statutory accounts?

(iii) should the level of detail in published accounts (the ones sent to Companies House) be changed?

(iv) should accounts have to be published?

(v) should there be further concessions for accounts of dormant companies?

(vi) is the volume of accounting concessions confusing?

(vii) should there be a standard format in which to give accounting information to Companies House and the Inland Revenue?

(viii) what should such a standard format be?

(ix) comments on the costs of preparing statutory accounts and on any potential cost savings;

(x) any other suggestions for reform.

This consultation provides an opportunity to influence the Government's thinking on how best to minimise the burden of accounting disclosure on companies, while at the same time ensuring that the information provided meets the reasonable needs of users of accounts, such as shareholders, banks, the Inland Revenue, creditors and others dealing with the company.

The consultative document has been placed in the Library of the Houses. Replies are invited by 4 September.

Patent Office

Mr. Thomason: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set the Patent Office executive agency for 1995–96. [27004]

Mr. Heseltine: In the light of the announcement I made on 14 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *305*, on the outcome of the review into the future options for my Department's Patent Office, I have set it the targets listed below for 1995–96. These are designed to encourage the Patent Office to contract out activities wherever this is compatible with its statutory role and good value for money as a means of continuing to improve efficiency and quality of service to its users.

Efficiency

To increase output in relation to total staff numbers by 2 per cent.

To increase output in relation to total staff costs by 2 per cent.

To increase output in relation to current expenditure by 2 per cent.

Quality of Service

To issue patent search reports within 12 weeks of receipt of a request in the Patent Office.

To issue patent examination reports within 18 months of publication.

To confirm payment of patent renewal fees within 7 working days of receipt in the Patent Office.

To issue initial search and examination reports on design application within 12 weeks of receipt of request.

To confirm payment of design registration renewal fees within 7 working days of receipt in the Patent Office.

To issue trade mark examination reports within 2 months of data capture in the Patent Office.

To advertise within 7 months of examination trade mark applications which attract no substantive objection at the examination stage.

To register within 4 months of advertisement trade mark applications which are not formally opposed.

The Patent Office's steering board will monitor performance against these targets and, in relation to those dealing with quality of service, will establish performance indicators aimed at incremental improvement on current standards.

In addition, I expect the chief executive of the Patent Office to continue to reply within 10 working days to all letters from Members of Parliament delegated to him for reply.

Power Generation Schemes

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those applications for power generation schemes under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 that were considered by a public inquiry, the date his Department referred them to an inquiry and the date on which his Department announced its decision. [27319]

Mr. Eggar: The information requested is as follows:

Public inquiries under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989

Station	*Referred*	*Decision*
Hinkley Point C	21 March 1988	6 September 1990
Didcot B	6 September 1991	23 September 1993
Ryedale	13 September 1991	25 March 1993
Staythorpe C	29 October 1991	26 May 1993
Belvedere	30 June 1992	12 April 1994

Attack Helicopters

Mr. Clelland: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the benefits to British industry for those British firms winning contracts to supply attack helicopters to the British Army. [26298]

Mr. Eggar: The assessment of the criteria for the British Army attack helicopter competition, of which proposals for United Kingdom industrial participation is one, is the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence, which is running the competition. However, my Department has received briefings from the UK prime contractors bidding for the contract, as well as from the Ministry of Defence. My Department is studying this information and is contributing to the decision-making process.

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those sales involving surplus land and property in which his Department has inserted a clause in the sale contract allowing his Department to obtain a share of any future development gain; and if he will make a statement. [26322]

Mr. Heseltine: None, because it has not, so far, been appropriate. My Department does keep the possibility in mind.

Complaints

Ms Hodge: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what policy and procedure exist for dealing with complaints against his Department by members of the public; when his Department last updated its policy; what time limit and target for dealing with such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedure exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint. [26215]

Mr. Ian Taylor: All DTI executive agencies and management units which have significant contact with members of the public and businesses have published charter standard statements which underpin their service delivery. Charter standard statements, which include details of the complaints procedures in place and the steps which should be taken in pursing a complaint, have been produced by the following:

Companies House
The Insolvency Service
Patent Office
Radiocommunications Agency
Overseas Trade Services

In addition, certain DTI agencies and management units are signatories to the code for enforcement agencies which brings together both deregulation and citizen's charter principles. Under the code the following have established complaints procedures in line with the charter.

Engineering Inspectorate
Export Control Organisation
Gas Examiners, Gas Meter Examiners
National Weights and Measures Laboratory

Details of the complaints procedures contained in the document have been placed in the Library of the House.

Steel Industry

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the level of employment in the steel industry in each of the last three years. [26391]

Mr. Eggar: The level of employment in the steel industry in each of the last three years was:

Thousand

	1992	*1993*	*1994*
Number of employees	41.2	39.7	38.1

Source:
ISSB

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what recent representations he has received on the levels of overtime currently being worked in the special steel industry at the present time. [26393]

Mr. Eggar: None.

Newsagents' Carriage Charges

Mr. Bill Michie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer the principle of newsagents' carriage charges to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement. [26512]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: This is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading who, under the competition legislation, is responsible for keeping markets under review, and has independent powers to make a reference to the MMC.

Defence Diversification

Mr. Mudie: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he last visited Yorkshire to discuss defence diversification; and if he will make a statement. [25099]

Mr. Eggar: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have visited Yorkshire for the purpose of discussing defence diversification. It is a matter for companies to decide whether, and into which markets, they should diversify. However, my Department monitors how the defence industry is responding to the defence downturn and has produced a manual, "Changing Tack: New Perspectives for Defence Suppliers", which provides guidance and advice on diversification. It is also participating in a NATO advanced studies institute on defence diversification which will be held in Scotland this July and has contributed £5,662 in support of costs. Some companies are eligible for assistance to help them adjust to changing markets, through non-sector specific UK schemes and some projects may qualify for European Community funding through the KONVER scheme.

Crown Post Offices

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many Crown post offices there were in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* England in 1994 and at the current date. [26730]

Mr. Page: I understand from the Post Office that the numbers of Crown post offices in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* England as at 1 April 1994 and 1995 is as follows:

	Lancashire	*England*
1 April 1994	13	677
1 April 1995	11	592

Civil Servants

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the number, grade and destination of civil servants in his Department who have been seconded to manufacturing industry in each year since 1992. [26573]

Mr. Eggar: The number of DTI staff who were on long-term secondment to business organisations, including manufacturing industry, in each calendar year since 1992 is as follows:

1993: 54
1994: 53
1995: 41 (to date)

Additional details on each of these secondments cannot be provided other than at disproportionate cost.

Energy Council

Llewellyn Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what matters were discussed, what matters were decided, and what votes were taken at the Energy Council meeting on 1 June. [26698]

Mr. Eggar: The Council considered several issues and received reports from the Commission on matters of interest. I represented the United Kingdom. Progress was made in a number of areas. In particular, the Council reached a common position on both the guidelines and the favourable context decisions in respect of trans-European energy networks.

I expressed concern at the lack of progress made on the proposals to liberalise the electricity market, which had been under discussion for over two years. I also stressed the UK's commitment to opening up the energy markets and emphasised the importance of access to networks and of allowing distributors, as well as large industrial users, to choose suppliers. Satisfactory conclusions were agreed which noted the result of the Commission study, produced at the request of the November 1994 Energy Council, which sets the conditions to be met by the single buyer approach before it could be regarded as being equivalent to negotiated third party access. The conclusions acknowledged that agreement had been reached on a number of these conditions, notably on the need for authorisation of independent power producers outside the tendering procedure, but a number of issues remained to be discussed, including the definition of independent power producers and the definition of consumers eligible to seek alternative supplies. The conclusions also set the agenda for the continuing work on this dossier during the Spanish presidency with the aim of reaching a common position by the end of the year.

The Council also reached agreement on a resolution on the Green Paper on energy policy, which is intended to help steer the Commission in its preparation of a White Paper expected later in the year. The resolution identified observations and principles to be taken into account in the consideration of energy policy including competitiveness, security of supply and the environment. I stressed the need for completion of the internal energy market as the most important aspect of energy policy at European level.

The Council held a discussion on THERMIE II programme on the basis of a presidency compromise proposal. I expressed strong misgivings the UK had about the proposal, but offered to consider a programme limited to dissemination. Discussion will continue in the working group.

The Commission gave an oral report on the progress of the proposed directive on energy efficiency requirements for fridges and freezers, which aims to improve the average efficiency of domestic electrical appliances by removing the most inefficient appliances from the market.

The Commission also gave an oral report on its review of Community legislation in the energy sector, which was in the course of preparation in response to a request by last November's Energy Council. The Council urged the Commission to produce its report as soon as possible.

In addition, progress reports were received on the establishment of the energy charter treaty secretariat and the energy dimension of the Barcelona Euro-Mediterranean conference to be held in November.

No formal votes were taken at the Council.

Brent Spar Platform

Mr. Soley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which body will be responsible for any pollution arising from the removal of the wreck of the Shell Brent Spar platform; and to what extent liability will reflect the polluter pays principle. [26692]

Mr. Eggar: The owners—Shell UK Ltd. and Esso Exploration & Production UK Ltd.—will be responsible. Any residual liabilities will remain with the owners in perpetuity.

Courage Ltd.

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he hopes to be able to announce his decision on the proposed take over of Courage Ltd. by Scottish and Newcastle plc. [26507]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Director General of Fair Trading at the Office of Fair Trading is currently considering this proposed takeover and he will advise my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade in due course. A decision on whether it should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission will be taken once that advice is received.

Nuclear Electric

Mr. Brian Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those aspects of the proposed privatisation of Nuclear Electric which will require parliamentary approval. [27260]

Mr. Eggar: The Government's White Paper "The Prospects for Nuclear Power in the UK", Cm 2860, stated in paragraph 7.30 that no primary legislation is required to privatise the nuclear generators.

Nuclear Holding Company

Mr. Brian Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade under what process the chairman of the proposed new nuclear holding company was appointed; and if he will list those bodies or individuals which were consulted about his suitability for the position. [27251]

Mr. Eggar: Mr. Robb was appointed as chairman designate of the proposed new nuclear holding company following consultation with the relevant Government Departments including the public appointments unit of the Cabinet Office.

Electricity Privatisation

Mr. Marlow: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a comparison between the consumer price of electricity and the retail prices index in the periods before and after privatisation on annual and other relevant bases. [25758]

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 24 May 1995]:* The information expressed as index numbers with 1990 = 100, is set out in the table:

Year	*RPI (all items)*	*RPI (excluding fuels)*	*Domestic electricity index*
1985	75.0	74.0	80.5
1986	77.6	77.2	82.2
1987	80.8	80.6	81.8
1988	84.8	84.8	86.2
1989	91.4	93.9	92.5
1990	100.0	100.0	100.0
1991	105.9	105.7	110.1
1992	109.8	109.7	115.8
1993	111.6	111.6	115.4
1994	114.3	114.0	[1]112.5

Notes:

[1] Excluding VAT payable at 8 per cent. from 1 April 1994.

Source:

Table 28 of Energy Trends and Table 56 of the Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics, 1994. Data for these tables are obtained from the Central Statistical Office.

Heysham 2

Mr. Ingram: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what funds were provided by the European Commission for the building of Heysham 2 nuclear power station; and what terms were applied to the provision of the funds. [25492]

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* Governmental approval was given to the CEGB in January 1978 and capital sanctions for Heysham 2 were approved by the CEGB in 1981. Checks made by Nuclear Electric, CEGB's successor company, have revealed no record of European Commission funding for this project.

Gas Licences

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his reply of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *418*, if he will give the dates and the parties involved in the later stages of consultation over the draft licences following the introduction of competition into the domestic gas market. [26287]

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* As part of the preparation for public consultation, my Department and the Office of Gas Supply held a meeting on 9 March to discuss the draft conditions with Alliance Gas Ltd., Bell Gas Ltd., Eastern Electricity plc, Mobil Gas Marketing Ltd., National Power PLC, and Vector Gas Ltd. My Department sent some earlier draft material to Amerada Hess Gas Ltd. on 27 January. Draft conditions were also discussed on various occasions with British Gas plc.

Information gained in these discussions helped in preparing the technical aspects of the drafts which were issued for public consultation on 20 and 27 March. My Department is considering the responses to the draft licences.

Long-stay Tourists (Italy)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will send a mission to Italy to examine the reasons for the level of long-stay tourist arrivals. [26540]

Mr. Dorrell: I have been asked to reply.

My proposals for action by the Government, the statutory tourist boards and the industry to improve the competitive performance of UK tourism were published in March. The work programme I then announced was based on a careful analysis of the UK tourism industry and the opportunities and threats it faces.

While the experience of other countries such as Italy is of interest, the lessons are not always easy to transfer to the domestic context, where very different conditions apply. I have therefore no plans to send a mission to Italy.

WALES

Heart Surgery

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in *(a)* Clwyd, *(b)* Gwynedd and *(c)* Powys travelled to England for heart surgery in each year since 1990; and if he will make a statement. [25161]

Mr. Richards: The number of completed consultant episodes for residents of Clwyd, Gwynedd and Powys for heart surgery, as reported by hospitals in England to the Mersey clearing house service, are given in the table:

	1991–92	*1992–93*
Clwyd	326	304
Gwynedd	131	193
Powys	47	61

Note:

Reliable information for 1990–91 and 1993–94 is not available. Figures may understate the true position in that no all hospitals supply complete medical details. Figures include all operative procedures on the heart as defined in Chapter K of the OPCS Classification of Surgical Procedures with the exception of Angioplasties (K49, K50, K51 and K63).

Baglan Hospital

Mr. John Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress has been made in the financing of the new Baglan hospital, Port Talbot; and when he expects the first main contracts for construction to be awarded. [25405]

Mr. Richards: The Glan-y-mor NHS trust expects to be able to submit its outline business case for the new Baglan hospital by June 1995. It will include the costs of a public sector option and detail how the trust intends to explore sources of finance from the private sector. In order to meet the planned completion date of financial year 1998–99, the trust aims to award main contracts by about the end of 1996.

Consultants

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of expenditure on consultancy by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* agencies for which his Department is responsible for (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what is projected for 1995–96. [25545]

Mr. Redwood: Expenditure on management and other consultants engaged by the Welsh Office was £1,454,000 in 1993–94 and £805,000 in 1994–95. Contracts for 1995–96 have not yet been finalised, but I have asked that expenditure should not exceed the reduced level recorded in 1994–95.

Information for non-departmental public bodies is not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much money was spent on management consultants in *(a)* his Department and *(b)* NHS organisations in Wales in the current year and for each of the last 10 years. [26201]

Mr. Redwood: Details of expenditure on management and other consultants engaged by the Welsh Office is as follows:

	£000
1985–86	243
1986–87	308
1987–88	345
1988–89	479
1989–90	342
1990–91	229
1991–92	1,109
1992–93	1,416
1993–94	1,454
1994–95	805

Information for NHS organisations in Wales is not held centrally.

Drug Abuse

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's policy concerning measures to halt drug abuse in Wales; and if he will make a statement. [25672]

Mr. Richards: I hope to publish a Welsh drug and alcohol strategy for consultation in the next few weeks.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many hectares of land *(a)* are eligible to be entered into each environmentally sensitive area in Wales and *(b)* have been entered into each tier of each environmentally sensitive area in Wales. [25797]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

Original schemes: Table 1

Environmentally sensitive area	*(a)*	*(b)*				
		(i)	*(ii)*	*(iii)*	*(iv)*	*(v)*
Cambrian Mountains (Original)	54,244	20,853	105	278	13	16
Cambrian Mountains (Extension)	64,536	20,393	162	92	2	2

(i) Semi-natural rough grazing;
(ii) Hay Meadows;
(iii) Broad-leaved woodland;
(iv) Archaeological features;
(v) Lakes, ponds and streams.

Original schemes: Table 2

	(a)	*(b)*		
		Tier 1	*Tier 2(1)*	*Tier 2(2)*
Lleyn Peninsula	41,304	28,048	3,589	54

Tier 1: All land;
Tier 2(1): Roughland;
Tier 2(2): Haymeadows.

Revised schemes: Table 3

	(a)	*(b)*			
		Tier 1A	*Tier 1B*	*Tier 1C*	*Tier 2A*
Cambrian mountains Original (revised)	54,244	16,532	38	215	3,060

Tier 1A: Semi-natural rough grazing; Tier 1B: Haymeadows;
Tier 1C: Broad-leaved woodland;
Tier 2A: Heather management.

Revised schemes: Table 4

	(a)	*(b)*			
		Tier 1	*Tier 1A*	*Tier 2A*	*Tier 2B*
Cambrian Mountains extension (revised)	64,536	3,382	2,169	856	6
Lleyn Peninsula (revised)	41,304	775	323	130	0

Tier 1: All land;
Tier 1A: Habitat management;
Tier 2A: Habitat management (voluntary);
Tier 2B: Reversion tier.

New schemes: Table 5

	(a)	*(b)*			
		Tier 1	*Tier 1A*	*Tier2A*	*Tier2B*
Clwydian Range	25,724	0	0	0	0
Preseli	113,878	2,320	538	403	8
Radnor	91,770	12,606	5,082	479	63
Ynys Mon	66,063	6,599	1,215	346	38

Tier 1: All land;
Tier 1A: Habitat management;
Tier 2A: Habitat management (voluntary);
Tier 2B: Reversion tier.

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many farms *(a)* are eligible to have land entered into each environmentally sensitive area in Wales and *(b)* have had land entered into each environmentally sensitive area in Wales. [25798]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The information requested is as follows:

Environmentally sensitive area	*(a)*	*(b)*
Cambrian Mountains Original	450	184
Cambrian Mountains Original (Revised)	450	95
Cambrian Mountains Extension	660	258
Cambrian Mountains Extension (Revised)	660	24
Clwydian Range	619	0
Lleyn Peninsula	960	588
Lleyn Peninsula (Revised)	960	23
Preseli	2,300	42
Radnor	1,035	152
Ynys Mon	1,576	147

Welsh European Centre

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the dates when he has visited the Welsh European Centre in Brussels; and if he will make a statement. [25929]

Mr. Redwood: I have not visited the Welsh European Centre.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many people in Wales aged over 64 years live in *(a)* private residential homes, *(b)* private nursing homes, *(c)* local authority residential homes and *(d)* national health service nursing homes; and of these, how many have the cost of their care paid wholly or partly by (i) their local authority, (ii) their health authority and (iii) the Department of Social Security; and how many pay for their care wholly from private resources; [25975]

(2) how many people in Wales aged over 64 years live in *(a)* private residential homes, *(b)* private nursing homes, *(c)* local authority residential homes and *(d)* NHS nursing homes; and of these, how many have the cost of their care paid wholly or partly by (i) their local authority, (ii) their health authority and (iii) the Department of Social Security; and how many pay for their care wholly from private resources. [25980]

Mr. Richards: Information on the numbers of people aged 65 and over living in residential accommodation at 31 March 1994 and their means of support is shown in the table.

		Means of Support			
Accommodation	*Number of residents aged 65 and over at 31 March 1994*[1]	*Local authority*[2]	*Health authority*	*Department of Social Security*	*Private means*
Private residential homes	6,672	1,047	—	2,859	1,980
Private nursing homes	10,047	2,086	28	4,714	1,790
Local authority residential homes	4,902	4,902	—	—	—

1. There are no NHS nursing homes in Wales.
[1] The total number of residents includes residents whose means of support is not known.
[2] Includes those reported as partly funded by the Department of Social Security and partly financed by the local authority.

Welsh Language

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will introduce an order requiring the privatised utilities to develop comprehensive bilingual policies in Wales as empowered by the Welsh Language Act 1993; and if he will make a statement. [25946]

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. and learned Gentleman to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bridgend (Mr. Griffiths) on 23 May, *Official Report*, column *556*, by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary.

Complaints

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what policy and procedures exist for dealing with complaints against his Department by members of the public; when his Department last updated its policy; what time limit and target for dealing with such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedure exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint. [26213]

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office is committed to handling any complaints promptly and fairly. Specific procedures for dealing with complaints under the code of access to Government information were set up, and published, in April 1994. These make clear that a review should normally be conducted by the line manager of the official who dealt with the case. The official considering the complaint must not have been involved in the original decision. A decision on an appeal should be given in writing within 20 working days of receiving the complaint. Complainants are advised that they may ask the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, through a Member of Parliament, to investigate their complaint.

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26229]

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Office aims to *(a)* reply within 15 working days to letters from members of the public; and *(b)* answer calls through the main switchboard in 12 seconds. Line managers monitor the handling of correspondence; records are not held centrally. The latest figures indicate that over 90 per cent. of calls are answered in the target time.

Residential Accommodation

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many people in Wales aged over 64 years living in *(a)* private residential homes, *(b)* private nursing homes, *(c)* local authority residential homes and *(d)* national health service nursing homes have a spouse living elsewhere. [25976]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not held centrally.

University Hospital of Wales Healthcare Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the secretary of state for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the University Hospital of Wales Healthcare NHS trust concerning the first-year deficit of the trust; what representations he has received from the trust concerning *(a)* short-term and *(b)* long-term loans; and if he will make a statement. [26600]

Mr. Redwood: None. But I expect the trust to meet its targets by 31 March 1996. One short-term loan has been made and repaid. No requests for long-term loans have been received.

Mr. Rhodri Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what procedures he undertook to establish the financial viability of the University Hospital of Wales Healthcare NHS trust before its final approval as a trust with effect from 1 April 1995. [26598]

Mr. Redwood: All trust applications are subjected to financial scrutiny including an assessment by independent external assessors.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales which consultations were appointed to carry out the appraisal of the business plan for the formation of the University Hospital of Wales NHS trust; and on what date the consultants commenced and completed their work; if they were appointed by competitive tender; and how much they were paid. [26599]

Mr. Redwood: Secta Consultation Ltd. was appointed on 26 September 1994, under competitive tender arrangements, to undertake the financial appraisal of five applications for NHS trust status received during 1994–95, including that from the University Hospital of Wales. It was paid a total of £17,625 for 23 days' work, which concluded in December 1994.

GP Fundholding

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to the answer of the Secretary of State for Health to the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *409*, if special provision will be made to cover retrospective management allowance payments by GP fundholders via the authorisation of extra-statutory payment; and what will be the level of payments for each relevant financial year. [26594]

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. member to the answer I gave my right hon. Friend, the member for Conwy (Sir Wyn Roberts) on 22 May, *Official Report*, column *460*.

Healthy Eating

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list his Department's projects aimed at promoting healthy eating indicating the cost of each project to his Department. [26300]

Mr. Richards: Projects aimed at promoting healthy eating are carried out in Wales by a variety of health and other organisations, and details are not held centrally. National projects such as the "Healthy Shopping Basket", "A Handbook for School Governors" and the "Heartbeat Awards", as well as the provision of advice, guidance and information are provided by the Health Promotion Authority for Wales. In 1994–95 its budget for this service was some £150,000.

Direct Labour Organisations

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list, by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980, surpluses achieved by local authority direct labour/service organisations in Wales for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94; [26418]

(2) if he will list by authority and service area the recorded deficits made by local authority direct labour/service organisations in Wales that have failed to meet the rate of return requirements under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 expressed in absolute and percentage terms; [26403]

(3) if he will list, by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government Act 1988, surpluses achieved by local authority direct labour/service organisations in Wales for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94; [26420]

(4) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved on trading accounts for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94 for *(a)* refuse collection, *(b)* street cleaning, *(c)* building cleaning, *(d)* school and welfare catering, *(e)* other catering, *(f)* vehicle maintenance, *(g)* grounds maintenance and *(h)* sports and leisure maintenance, delivered by local authorities; direct labour/service organisations in Wales under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988; [26419]

(5) if he will list by authority and service area the recorded deficits made by local authority direct labour/service organisations in Wales that have failed to meet the rate of return requirements operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 expressed in absolute and percentage terms; [26402]

(6) if he will list for each authority the surplus achieved on trading accounts for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94 for *(a)* general highways work, *(b)* construction and maintenance of sewers, *(c)* works of new construction and *(d)* maintenance work, delivered by local authorities' direct labour/service organisations in Wales under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980. [26417]

Mr. Redwood: I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my letter in the Library of the House.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list by authority and service area the number of full time equivalent job losses experienced by local authority direct labour/service organisations in Wales operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94; [26405]

(2) if he will list by authority and service area the number of full time equivalent job losses experienced by local authority direct labour/service organisations in Wales operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94. [26406]

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many and what proportion of local authority direct labour/service organisations in Wales operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988 have achieved the required rate of return for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94; [26401]

(2) how many and what proportion of local authority direct labour/service organisations in Wales operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980 have achieved the required rate of return for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94. [26400]

Mr. Redwood: My Department received a total of 285 reports in respect of work carried out by local authority direct labour/service organisations for the financial year 1992–93 under the terms of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and the Local Government Act 1988. The required rate of return was achieved in respect of 241—84.56 per cent.—of the reports received.

My Department has not yet completed its analysis of the reports submitted by local authorities in respect of the financial year 1993–94. Consequently the information requested by the hon. Member is not yet available.

Special Education Needs

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to improve the opportunities for children with special needs. [26352]

Mr. Richards: The Education Act 1993 introduced a range of measures designed to improve provision for children with special needs, including a code of practice containing guidance and criteria for the identification, assessment and other arrangements for such pupils.

Local Government

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many councillors in Wales have been surcharged or prosecuted as a consequence of taking decisions in relation to the Local Government Act 1988; [26422]

(2) how many councillors in Wales have been surcharged or prosecuted as a consequence of taking decisions in relation to the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980. [26421]

Mr. Redwood: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list by service area the local authorities in Wales that have been challenged by his Department under regulations issued under section 9 of the Local Government Act 1992 in relation to their internal arrangements for establishing client-contractor splits. [26404]

Mr. Redwood: None.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many complaints his Department received in the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 alleging anti-competitive behaviour by local authorities in Wales under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980; and, as a result, how many local authorities where subsequently issued with a section 19a notice or 19b direction; [26407]

(2) how many complaints his Department received in the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 alleging anti-competitive behaviour by local authorities in Wales under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988; and, as a result, how many local authorities were subsequently issued with a section 19a notice or 19b direction. [26408]

Mr. Redwood: The Department received the following number of complaints alleging anti-competitive behaviour by local authorities in Wales under the terms of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 and Local Government Act 1988:

1990–91: 6
1991–92: 8
1992–93: 19
1993–94: 11

Seven notices were served under section 13 of the Local Government Act 1988 and one notice under section 19A of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980. Four directions were given under section 14 of the Local Government Act 1988 and one direction was given under section 19B of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

Premature Retirements

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many teachers took early retirement in the school years 1993–94 and 1994–95; and if he will make a statement. [26356]

Mr. Richards: The number of teachers taking premature retirement was 723 in 1993–94 and 742 in 1994–95. The definition of premature retirement excludes retirement on health grounds and also excludes all teachers aged under 50. The data are provided by the Teachers' Pension Agency.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many children have been given assisted places at private schools in Wales in each of the years since the assisted places scheme was inaugurated. [26358]

Mr. Richards: The information is as follows:

Assisted places scheme: Total number of new pupils each academic year since 1981–82

Academic year	*Number of new pupils*
1981–82	114
1982–83	113
1983–84	120
1984–85	118
1985–86	115
1986–87	123
1987–88	115
1988–89	126
1989–90	104
1990–91	123
1991–92	130
1992–93	131
1993–94	127
1994–95	[1]130

[1] Provisional.

GP Patients

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many patients have been struck off the registers of *(a)* fundholding general practitioners and *(b)* non-fundholding general practitioners in the last year for which figures are available; [26424]

(2) how many patients have been struck off the registers of general practitioners in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available. [26423]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is not collected routinely for Wales. However, information supplied by family health services authorities indicates that in 1993–94 just over 3,500 patients were transferred at the request of general medical practitioners or removed from GP lists because of an act or threat of violence. Separate details for fundholding and non-fundholding GPs are not available.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make available extra cash for further education colleges in Wales. [26354]

Mr. Richards: Since they became autonomous on 1 April 1993 we have provided substantial additional

resources for further education colleges in Wales. The 1995–96 provision is 57 per cent. greater in cash terms than in 1992–93. Funding for the further education sector in the current financial year and planned funding for the next two years is as follows:

£ million

	1995–96	1996–97	1997–98
Recurrent	154.612	158.947	162.547
Capital	15.971	19.833	18.733
Less FEFCW running costs	(2.558)	(2.558)	(2.558)
Total available to FE sector	168.025	176.222	178.722

The figures for 1996–97 and 1997–98 are for planning purposes and will be reviewed in the next public expenditure survey.

Employment

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's estimate of the percentage of people in rural Wales who have problems finding permanent employment, and what statistics his Department published on these data. [26499]

Mr. Redwood: Most of those who become unemployed leave the register within six months. Latest available figures for those remaining on the register in rural Wales for more than a year are shown in the following table:

Long term unemployment in rural Wales[1]

Travel to work	*Persons*	*Rate*
Aberystwyth	177	1.2
Brecon	214	1.9
Cardigan	249	2.1
Dolgellau and Barmouth	173	2.7
Lampeter and Aberaeron	198	2.1
Llandrindod Wells	218	1.6
Machynlleth	114	1.9
Newtown	89	0.7
Portmadoc and Ffestiniog	253	2.9
Welshpool	129	1.1
Wales	37,414	2.9

[1] Rural Wales is defined as those travel to work areas with at least 5 per cent. of their population within the Development Board for Rural Wales boundary.

In each of the travel-to-work areas long-term unemployment rates are at or below the Welsh average.

The labour force survey also provides estimates at an all-Wales level of the number of temporary workers. In the period September to November 1994 4.9 per cent. of the work force described themselves as having temporary jobs, of whom about half were seeking permanent employment. No estimates are available at a more local level.

"Lifestyles in Rural Wales"

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of the document, "Lifestyles in Rural Wales", commissioned by his Department. [26491]

Mr. Redwood: Yes. I have arranged to do so.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make a statement on the date of the *(a)* submission and *(b)* publication of the report "Lifestyles in Rural Wales", and if he will list the costs of (i) providing and (ii) publishing the report; and if he will make a statement on its contents and; [26501]

(2) if he will make a statement on the conclusions of the report, "Lifestyles in Rural Wales". [26497]

Mr. Redwood: The final version of the document "Lifestyles in Rural Wales: A study of four areas" was submitted to the Welsh Office on 8 April 1994. My Department disagreed with the methodology in a number of respects, and wrote to the authors on 9 November 1994 expressing its disappointment and informing them that the Welsh Office had no objection to their publishing the document. The report cost approximately £65,000, with some £51,000 provided by the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency, and the balance by the Welsh Office.

The report was based largely on a questionnaire exercise in four areas of rural Wales. My Department was not satisfied that the evidence supported some of the report's conclusions.

Grant-Maintained Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the grant-maintained schools in Clwyd. [26353]

Mr. Richards: There are six grant-maintained schools in Clwyd and these are as follows:

Derwen Primary School, Higher Kinnerton
Ysgol Pen-y-Bryn, Colwyn Bay
Eirias High School, Colwyn Bay
Ysgol Emrys ap Iwan, Abergele
The Maelor School, Wrexham
Ysgol Bryn Elian, Colwyn Bay

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the grant maintained schools in each unitary authority indicating the percentage of schools that are grant maintained and the percentage of pupils attending them. [26511]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is as follows:

Unitary authority	*School*
Anglesey	Ysgol Gynradd Caergeiliog
Aberconwy and Colwyn	Ysgol Pen Y Bryn
	Ysgol Emrys Ap IwanEirias High School
	Ysgol Bryn Elian
Flintshire	Ysgol Derwen
Wrexham	The Maelor School
Powys	Llanerfyl G M School
Swansea	Bishop Vaughan R C School
Vale of Glamorgan	Stanwell Comprehensive
	St Cyres Comprehensive School
Caerphilly	Cwmcarn G M School
Blaenau Gwent	Brynmawr Comprehensive
Torfaen	St Alan's R C Comprehensive School
Monmouthshire	Our Lady and St Michael's School
Cardiff	Mary Immaculate R C High School

Unitary authority	[1]Number of grant maintained schools as a percentage of all maintained schools	[2]Percentage of pupils attending grant maintained schools
Anglesey	1.8	2.3
Caernarfonshire and Merionethshire	—	—
Aberconwy and Colwyn	5.4	22.2
Denbighshire	—	—
Flintshire	1.1	0.8
Wrexham	1.2	2.6
Powys	0.8	0.1
Cardiganshire	—	—
Pembrokeshire	—	—
Carmarthenshire	—	—
Swansea	0.9	2.5
Neath and Port Talbot	—	—
Bridgend	—	—
Vale of Glamorgan	3.3	12.5
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff	—	—
Merthyr Tydfil	—	—
Caerphilly	0.9	1.2
Blaenau Gwent	2.2	4.5
Torfaen	2.0	3.5
Monmouthshire	2.0	1.8
Newport	—	—
Cardiff	0.8	1.2
Wales	0.8	2.1

[1]The percentage of schools that are grant maintained as at January 1995.
[2]Based on January 1994 pupil numbers from the Schools Census.

Nursery Schools

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of three to five-year-olds attend nursery schools in Wales *(a)* full time and *(b)* part time. [26355]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is as follows:

Percentage of three to five-year-olds[1] who were:

At maintained	Full-time pupils	Part-time pupils	Total
Nursery schools	0.8	1.9	2.7
Primary Schools:			
Nursery classes	3.9	14.4	18.3
Ordinary classes	66.9	1.0	67.8
Total in primary schools	70.8	15.4	[2]86.2
Total in nursery and primary schools	71.6	17.3	88.9

Notes:
[1] Ages at 31 August 1993.
[2] The slight discrepancy between the sum of constituent items and total shown is due to rounding.
Source:
January 1994 Schools Census.

Nu-Kote International, Deeside

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he has taken to persuade NK International, on Deeside Park, to remain in production; and if he will make a statement. [26359]

Mr. Redwood: I regret the decision by Nu-Kote International to cease production on Deeside. This is, however, a commercial decision for the company.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the chairman of the Welsh Development Agency concerning the implications of *(a)* the recently issued and *(b)* the previously applicable urban development guidelines in relation to the frustration of third party private sector urban redevelopment; and if he will make a statement. [26597]

Mr. Redwood: The urban development guidelines, issued in March this year, include specific provisions covering situations where the agency's support for one development may lead to the frustration of another. The guidelines were discussed in draft by my officials and staff of the agency.

Cardiff Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *461*, if he will place a copy in the Library of the site options study for the new £5.8 million bird reserve on the Gwent Levels to be paid for by the Cardiff Bay development corporation. [26593]

Mr. Redwood: As I made clear in my reply to the hon. Member on 22 May more detailed investigations are now being undertaken to determine which sites considered in the study present the best options. When these detailed investigations have been completed an announcement will be made and I will make arrangements for a copy of the final report to be placed in the Library of the House.

Integrated Administration and Control System

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what recent representations he has received on the complexity of integrated administration and control system forms; what plans he has to simplify their form, and if he will make a statement. [26551]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Several. This year's forms have again been kept as straightforward as is consistent with the need to gather detailed information from farmers. Further help has been provided for farmers this year; the majority received a print out showing the key details from their 1994 returns. This enabled them to update last year's information, rather than have to complete fresh forms. The explanatory booklet was also improved this year with further clarification to the text and greater use of cross-references.

Suggestions for further improvement are welcomed. Every participating farmer has been invited to comment on the scheme literature to assist in the preparation of the documentation from 1996. However, the extent to which the forms and literature can be simplified further is constrained by the need to meet the requirements for the collection of detailed information. These requirements are prescribed in the governing regulations and are necessary in order to enable the system to achieve its overall objective and to ensure that the substantial payments which farmers receive are made on a proper basis.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts) of 22 May, column *460*, relating to GP fundholders' practice management expenses, what departmental provision he proposes to assist him in making his calculations; and what work will be *(a)* deferred and *(b)* not done within his Department, consequent on such provision. [27013]

Mr. Redwood: No calculations are required in relation to the payments which have been made to GP fundholder practices in respect of management expenses.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what considerations underlie his decision on whether to link questions for oral answers; and how many questions he assumes will be answered in the period allocated for reply by him.

Mr. Alison: Questions are linked if they relate to the same subject area. The commissioners are allotted five minutes for oral questions every six weeks when the House is in Session. On average, the first two or three questions are reached. More may be reached if all the questions to the Lord Chancellor's Department, which follow immediately after ours, are answered in less than the allotted time, in which case the House reverts to Church Commissioner's questions.

TREASURY

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Hain: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what forecast he has made for the debt write-off in rail privatisation. [19973]

Sir George Young: No decisions have yet been taken about the form of Railtrack's capital structure on sale and accordingly it is not yet possible to forecast the impact of rail privatisation on the structure of debt in the industry.

Income Tax

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* for a full year, the revenue cost/yield of altering the top rate of income tax and the top rate of capital gains tax from 40 per cent. to *(a)* 30 per cent. and *(b)* 50 per cent. on gross income and capital gains over (i) £30,000, (ii) £70,000, (iii) £80,000 and (iv) £100,000, assuming that (1) where the new top rate is lower than 40 per cent. the 40 per cent. band is abolished and (2) where it is higher, the 40 per cent. band remains in place; [25012]

(2) if he will estimate or *(a)* 1995–96 and *(b)* for a full year, the revenue/cost yield of altering the top rate of income tax from 40 per cent. to *(a)* 30 per cent. and *(b)* 50 per cent. on gross income over (i) £30,000, (ii) £70,000, (iii) £80,000 and (iv) £100,000 assuming that (1) where the new top rate is lower than 40 per cent. the 40 per cent. band is abolished, and (2) where it is higher, the 40 per cent. band remains in place. [25013]

Sir George Young: Estimates covering this range of options were given in my reply to the hon. Member on 25 May 1995, *Official Report*, columns *713–14*. Separate figures on capital gains tax were given in my reply to the hon. Member on 11 May 1995, *Official Report*, column *259*.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the number and percentage of basic rate and higher rate tax payers in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* the United Kingdom for the most recent year for which figures are available. [26569]

Sir George Young: The table provides estimates for 1992–93, the latest available year for which information can be provided below the United Kingdom level.

Basic and higher rate taxpayers 1992–93

	Taxpayers liable at basic rate but not higher rate		*Taxpayers liable at higher rate*	
	Thousands	*Percentage*[1]	*Thousands*	*Percentage*[1]
Lancashire	428	72.3	27	4.6
United Kingdom	19,500	76.0	1,720	6.7

[1] Of total number of taxpayers including those liable only to the lower rate of tax.

Manufacturing Companies

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will bring up to date the table in the answer of 7 July 1980, *Official Report*, column *71*, showing the undistributed income of companies after depreciation and stock appreciation; and if he will add figures for manufacturing companies; [25680]

(2) if he will bring up to date the table in the answer of 29 January 1982, *Official Report*, column *447*, concerning saving, depreciation and related matters; and if he will now add figures for manufacturing. [25682]

Mr. Nelson: Information on corporate savings, depreciation, and stock appreciation is published in tables 3.6, 5.6 and 5.9 of the Central Statistical Office Blue Book 1994 edition, United Kingdom national accounts, which is available in the Library of the House. The corresponding data for manufacturing are not available, other than depreciation which is published in table 14.1 of the CSO Blue Book. More up-to-date information, including that for 1994, will be published in the 1995 edition of Blue Book, on 3 August 199.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date the table in the answer dated 31 July 1981, *Official Report*, column *600*, showing the net rate of return at current replacement cost of manufacturing companies. [25685]

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given him on 12 January 1995, *Official Report*, column *191*. The data have not been updated since. More up to date information will be published in the CSO's "First Release", "Profitability of UK companies", which will next be issued on 11 July 1995.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date his answer of 19 July 1983, *Official Report*, column *81*, showing the net rate of return at historic cost of manufacturing companies. [25616]

Mr. Nelson: The data are not yet available at historic cost under the new definition of manufacturing. For rates of return at current replacement cost, I refer the hon. Member to the reply given him on 12 January 1995, *Official Report*, column *191*.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date the table in the answer of 11 February 1980, Official Report, columns 436-38, concerning profits of large manufacturing companies and the money supply. [25681]

Mr. Nelson: The manufacturing industry figures shown in the table are no longer available. The production of the data that were published in the CSO's "Business Monitor," MA3: "Company Finance", has since been discontinued. Issue 23, the final issue, was published in, 1992 and contains data on large companies for 1988, 1989 and 1990. This publication is available from the Library of the House.

Deflated money supply figures are not published. Money supply figures are published in tables 3.1C and 3.1D of the CSO's "Financial Statistics".

Trading Losses

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date his answer date 7 March 1983, *Official Report*, column *286*, on trading losses. [25618]

Sir George Young: Available information is as follows. Data for years before 1985 could be provided only at disproportionate cost. All figures are estimates and subject to error.

	All companies		*Manufacturing*		*Financial institutions*	
	Number of companies 000	*Losses £ million*	*Number of companies 000*	*Losses £ million*	*Number of companies 000*	*Losses £ million*
1985	120	8,800	25	2,500	10	1,600
1986	120	10,100	25	3,000	10	2,000
1987	120	12,700	25	3,100	10	4,200
1988	130	13,700	25	2,900	10	2,500
1989	140	20,000	25	3,900	10	5,600
1990	160	23,700	30	4,800	10	9,200
1991	160	29,500	30	5,400	10	9,200
1992	160	26,200	30	4,700	10	8,400

Losses are "Gross Case I" losses, i.e. after deducting short-term interest and before deducting depreciation.

Bank Profits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the increase in the profitability before exceptionals of the retail banks in 1993 and 1994. [25477]

Mr. Nelson: A comprehensive estimate embracing all retail banks could be provided only at disproportionate cost. But part III of the Bank of England's Banking Act report for 1994–95, laid before the House on 24 May, includes a table showing the operating profits before bad debts; together with the pre and post-tax profits, of the larger United Kingdom banks for each year from 1990 to 1994.

Consultants

Ms Hodge: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of expenditure on consultancy by *(a)* the Treasury and *(b)* agencies for which the Treasury is responsible for (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25647]

Mr. Nelson: The level of expenditure for the years 1993–94 and 1994–95 and the estimate for 1995–96 for the Treasury are given in the table. The Treasury is not responsible for any agencies.

Expenditure on consultancy

	£ million—ex VAT
1993–94	5.9
1994–95	1.0
1995–96[1]	1.0

[1] Estimate.

Retail Sales Index

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors are used to obtain the retail sales index; what representations he has received concerning the retail sales index in the last year; and what plans he has to reform it. [25918]

Mr. Nelson: The monthly retail index is based on a statutory inquiry which collects figures of retail sales from a sample of 5,000 retailers. All types of retailer are included in the sample. Detailed price indicators from the retail price index are used to convert the sales index to constant 1990 prices and the X11 seasonal adjustment routine, widely used within government and by statistical offices in other countries, applied to remove normal seasonal variations.

During 1994, representations were received from the then Minister for Industry concerning the format of the Central Statistical Office's "First Release." It has also been the subject of one parliamentary question and one Minister's case.

The inquiry has recently been reviewed as a result of the Prime Minister's instructions on the control of statistical surveys. Copies of the report of the review of the short period retailing inquiries are available from the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what range in size of companies is used for the formulation of the retail sales index. [25919]

Mr. Nelson: The size of the businesses used in the formulation of the retail sales index extends from the VAT threshold of £58,000 turnover per annum upwards.

Industrial and Commercial Borrowing

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date his answer dated 15 March 1983, *Official Report*, column *96*, concerning bank advances to industry. [25617]

Mr. Nelson: The company accounts analysis, which was the basis of the previous reply, is no longer conducted. Alternatively, information from the national accounts is given in the table; data for earlier years are not available on a consistent basis and there is no separate information for manufacturing companies. The source series are published in table 10.6c of "Financial Statistics".

Industrial and commercial companies' borrowing

£ million

	Borrowing from UK banks[1]	*Net borrowing requirement (NBR)*[2]	*Borrowing from UK bank as per cent. of NBR*
1984	7,082	3,044	233
1985	7,454	10,620	70
1986	9,084	12,538	72
1987	12,224	27,033	45
1988	32,032	49,743	64
1989	33,816	54,683	62
1990	19756	37,275	53
1991	–822	25,851	–3
1992	–1,794	27,187	–7
1993	–11,371	15,285	–74
1994	–5,289	8,348	–63

[1] Comprises bank lending and the Bank of England's issue department's transactions in bills. A positive sign means an increase in net borrowing; a negative sign means net repayment of borrowing.

[2] In addition to borrowing from UK banks, includes capital issues of shares and bonds, borrowing from overseas, and transactions in liquid and other financial assets.

Contracting Out

Ms Hodge: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what work has been contracted out *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* by agencies for which his Department is responsible in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what is projected for 1995–96. [25648]

Mr. Nelson: The following table shows the work contracted out by the Treasury, under the "Competing for Quality" initiative, and the year it was contracted or is likely to be contracted out.

Contract	*Year*
Library Services	1993–94
Internal Audit Services (2 Contracts)	1993–94
Security Guarding Services	1994–95
Computer Support Services (under construction)	1995–96

Customs and Excise

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the future location of *(a)* management functions and *(b)* operational functions of the Customs and Excise currently located in Newcastle upon Tyne; and if he will make a statement on the future for the Customs and Excise Newcastle headquarters and the employment impact of the proposed reorganisation. [26210]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: One of the outcomes of the fundamental expenditure review of Customs and Excise was a reduction in the number of regional offices, collections, from 21 to 14. The former Northern England, which had its headquarters in Newcastle, and Leeds collections were merged with effect from 1 April 1995 to form a new collection retaining the title of Northern England. The new collection will be managed from Leeds.

The headquarters support functions will be split between Newcastle and Leeds so that staff reductions are shared. In the short term the Newcastle headquarters building will be retained, but the longer-term position has not yet been decided.

There will continue to be Customs staff in the Tyne and Tees areas. The VAT and Excise functions in the Newcastle area will be combined in offices in Newcastle, Washington and Middlesbrough.

Collection staff levels will reduce overall by about 16 per cent. as a result of the FER with the majority of the reductions spread over a four year period. Specific figures for the impact on Newcastle are not available yet. However, it is intended that, as far as is practicable and reasonable, the impact of the cuts will be spread evenly across the new collection. The Department has a clearly stated policy to avoid compulsory redundancy wherever possible.

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what policy and procedures exists for dealing with complaints against his Department by members of the pubic; when the policy was last updated; what time limit and target for dealing with such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedures exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint. [26226]

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury has a complaints procedure in line with the "Open Government" code of practice on government information.

Any complaint against the Treasury by a member of the public would be given very careful consideration, up to the most senior levels if necessary. If the member of the public was dissatisfied with how the complaint had been dealt with, he or she could ask a Member of Parliament to submit his or her complaint to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration for investigation and review.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measures against the target set. [26237]

Mr. Nelson: The Treasury has performance targets for replying to letters from the public but not for answering telephone calls. Wherever possible, information requested over the telephone is given at the time of the call.

The Treasury's targets for Ministerial replies to letters from the public forwarded by Members of Parliament are

15 working days for those matters solely relating to the Treasury; 18 working days for those matters relating to the Chancellor's other departments and 23 working days for those requiring a report from a local office. The targets are monitored by the Treasury's ministerial correspondence unit and published in the Department's annual report, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. In 1994, 14,901 replies were sent, 54 per cent. of which were within the targets set.

The targets for replies from officials on behalf of Ministers are 10 to 15 working days.

Competitiveness

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the relationship between international competitiveness and purchasing power parities. [26543]

Mr. Nelson: Improving price competitiveness tends to be associated with appreciating purchasing power parity exchange rates for any given nominal market exchange rate. In general, the concept of competitiveness embraces much more than relative prices. Among other factors, relative costs, product quality, marketing and after-sales service are also important.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what priority he accords to the need for British goods to compete on price at home and abroad in evaluating advice he receives on monetary policy from the Governor of the Bank of England. [27018]

Mr. Nelson: Economies function most effectively in conditions of low and stabled inflation. Low inflation also helps to keep British goods and services competitive. Interest rates are set to deliver low inflation. Underlying inflation has now been below 3 per cent. for 19 consecutive months, the longest such period since 1961.

Imported Manufactures

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the items in table 18.2 of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics" which have risen in price as a result of the increase in the price of imported manufactures since 1992; and if he will make a statement on the relationship between falling exchange rates and inflation. [26542]

Mr. Nelson: Changes in the prices of imported manufactures and the exchange rate are two of many factors which influence the prices of different categories of goods and services.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, column *907* (1) concerning import penetration, if he will list the data he holds at the available level of desegregation, giving details of significant changes of coverage during the period specified; [26558]

(2) relating to manufacturing output, if he will list the levels of disaggregation in any available form. [27073]

Mr. Nelson: The data published in table 15.10 of the April "Monthly Digest of Statistics" are based on the classification used in the standard industrial classification 1980. Output data on the same basis are available for 1979 and 1994 and can be accessed by the House of Commons Library. Comparable data for 1973 are not available.

The CSO has recently reinstated the import penetration series. The data appear in table 15.10 of the April 1995 "Monthly Digest of Statistics" and are based on the classifications used in SIC 1992. Output data on the same basis for 1973, 1979 and 1994 are available and can be accessed by the House of Commons Library.

The output data covering periods 1983 to 1993 are also published in table 2.5 of the publication United Kingdom national accounts—the CSO Blue Book, 1994 edition. Data for the periods 1984 to 1994 will be published in the 1995 issue later this year.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps the Government are taking to reduce the import share of the United Kingdom market for manufactures. [26557]

Mr. Nelson: The Government aim to help British industry compete successfully both at home and abroad by providing a stable macro-economic climate and promoting structural policies to improve the long-term performance of the economy, including manufacturing industry.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if detailed figures on import penetration will be available to hon. Members after the contracting out of data collection and analysis to the private sector. [26547]

Mr. Nelson: In the event of contracting out of data collection and analysis to the private sector, detailed figures on import penetration would continue to be available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors underlie the rate of import penetration of the United Kingdom market for manufactures since the third quarter of 1994. [27074]

Mr. Nelson: Import penetration depends on a variety of factors, including international specialisation, price and non-price competitiveness, domestic demand, and domestic capacity.

Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the factors underlying the amounts invested in increased capacity by United Kingdom firms *(a)* overseas and *(b)* in the United Kingdom. [26544]

Mr. Nelson: An assessment of the main factors influencing recent developments and prospects for domestic investment was published in the November 1994 "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Alcohol Excise Duty

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the total revenue collected from *(a)* beer, *(b)* wine and *(c)* spirits for each year since 1985. [26494]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is given in the table. The receipts cover excise duty and VAT, calculated from Central Statistical Office figures for consumers' expenditure:

£million

	Total receipts Beer	*Total receipts Wine*	*Total receipts Spirits*
1985–86	3,050	1,050	2,000
1986–87	3,150	1,100	2,000
1987–88	3,250	1,150	2,100
1988–89	3,400	1,250	2,150
1989–90	3,450	1,250	2,100

£million

	Total receipts Beer	Total receipts Wine	Total receipts Spirits
1990–91	3,750	1,350	2,350
1991–92	4,250	1,600	2,550
1992–93	4,350	1,650	2,450
1993–94	[1]4,300	1,800	2,550
1994–95 provisional	4,550	1,950	2,600

Figures rounded to the nearest £50 million.
[1] Beer duty receipts were reduced by some £200 million in 1993–94 due to the change in duty point.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the revenue collected per pint of beer for each year since 1985. [26492]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested is given in the table:

	Revenue per pint (pence)
1985–86	28.1
1986–87	28.7
1987–88	28.7
1988–89	29.9
1989–90	30.5
1990–91	33.1
1991–92	38.3
1992–93	40.8
1993–94	44.0
1994–95 (provisional)	43.8

Self-employment

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer in what ways the criteria applied by the Inland Revenue in deciding whether a person is employed or self-employed differ from those applied by the Contributions Agency. [26390]

Sir George Young: The criteria applied by the Inland Revenue and the Contributions Agency in deciding whether a person is employed or self-employed are based on the same body of general case law. They are set out in the Inland Revenue leaflet IR56/N139. An updated version of this leaflet is to be published shortly. There are a very limited number of groups of workers where statutory provisions may result in different tax and national insurance treatment.

Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer which increases in prices since September 1992 of the categories listed in table 18.2 of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics" he assesses to be inflationary. [26530]

Mr. Nelson: Any price increase adds to the 12-month inflation rate for 12 months.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors underline the relative rates of increases in the price of *(a)* services and *(b)* goods since 1979; and what effect the Government's exchange rate policy has had on such price increases. [26545]

Mr. Nelson: The relative rates of increase in the prices of goods and services depend on a number of factors such as the relative changes in costs, competitive pressures and the exchange rate.

Bank of England

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will instigate an inquiry into briefings given to journalists by Bank of England personnel within the period 15 May to 22 May on the recommendations on monetary policy actions which will be made by the Governor of the Bank of England at the next monthly monetary policy meeting; and if he will make a statement. [26452]

Mr. Nelson: I have no reason to believe that the Bank has given briefings to journalists on the advice it intends to give at the next monthly monetary policy meeting; or indeed that the Bank would have formulated its advice so far in advance of the next meeting. The Bank has made it clear, as has the Chancellor, that such advice is confidential until released in the published minutes.

Tourism

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the trade surplus or deficit on tourism in each year since 1970 at 1994 prices; and what assessment he has made of the contributions to the variations made by the monetary and exchange rate policies of successive Governments. [26541]

Mr. Nelson: Figures for the balance of trade in tourism are available on the Central Statistical Office database, which can be accessed through the Library of the House.

The balance of trade in tourism is influenced by many factors, and it is not possible to isolate with any confidence the effects stemming from monetary and exchange rate policies.

Casinos

Mr. David Atkinson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates have been made regarding the loss of revenue to the Exchequer from casinos as a result of the 48-hour rule on admission; and if he will make a statement. [26586]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No such estimates have been made. The 48-hour rule is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Home Secretary.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the proposed rates of new vehicle excise duty for *(a)* tower waggons, *(b)* street cleansing vehicles and *(c)* vehicles used in the construction industry. [26495]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: From 1 July 1995 tower wagons and street cleansing vehicles will pay the full rates of vehicle excise duty as set out in paragraphs 6 and 14 of schedule 4 of the Finance Act 1995. These can vary from £125 to £5,000 per annum, depending on weight and other considerations such as axle configuration. Copies of the Finance Act 1995 are held in the House of Commons Library. All vehicles used in the construction industry that weigh less than 3,500 kg will pay £135 VED per annum. Mobile cranes, works trucks, digging machines and road rollers that weigh more than 3,500 kg will pay £150. Other construction industry vehicles will pay the full rates of VED set out in the Finance Act 1995.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimated new revenue arising from the changes in vehicle excise duty; and if he will make a statement on their impact on costs to industry. [26493]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The Finance Act 1995 introduced a number of changes to vehicle excise duties that produced new revenue:

	£ Million
Increase in excise duty on cars	55
Changes to the exemptions and concessions from VED	25
Changes to the definition of goods vehicles	5
Other changes	30

The freezing of duty on lorries cost £10 million in revenue.

The projected costs to industry of complying with the changes to vehicle excise duty can be found in the compliance cost assessment prepared and published by the Department of Transport.

Extra-statutory Payments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the total level of extra-statutory payments authorised by all spending departments in each financial year since 1983–84. [26601]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: This information is not held centrally.

Fuel Excise Duty

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what are the current duty rates per tonne for *(a)* coal, *(b)* orimulsion and *(c)* heavy duty fuel oil. [26780]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The current excise duty rates are as follows:

	Rate
Coal:	nil
Orimulsion:	nil
Heavy fuel oil:	£16.70 per tonne

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what plans he has to change his target for underlying inflation from the RPIX to the RPIY measure, [26704]

(2) whether the policy indicated by his predecessor to the Treasury Select Committee to keep RPIX inflation below 2 per cent. remains Government policy; and what is his target for underlying inflation beyond the end of the current Parliament. [26703]

Mr. Nelson: The Government's aim is to keep underlying inflation in the range 1 to 4 per cent., and to bring it down into the lower half of this range by the end of the present Parliament. I have no plans to change the objective for that period.

Council Tax Appeals

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many appeals are outstanding in *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* the north-west and England in respect of the valuation of properties for council tax.

Mr. Nelson: The number of council tax appeals outstanding as at 3 April 1995 is:

(a) Pendle: 189

(b) North-west: 12,701

(c) England: 143,712

VAT-registered Businesses

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many businesses registered and deregistered for VAT in *(a)* Pendle and *(b)* the north-west for each year since 1991. [26728]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Customs does not have information concerning the number of businesses registered and deregistered in the Pendle constituency. The local VAT office at Blackburn covers, in addition to Blackburn, the towns of Bolton, Burnley, Accrington and Clitheroe. Figures for the north-west cover Lancashire, Greater Manchester and Merseyside. The numbers of registrations and deregistrations for VAT since 1991 are as follows:

Year	Registration at Blackburn Office	Deregistration at Blackburn Office	Registration in the North-west	Deregistration in the North-west
1991	2,298	2,911	18,644	21,484
1992	2,114	2,369	17,326	21,370
1993	2,099	2,523	16,412	20,752
1994	1,904	2,339	15,174	18,600
1995[1]	395	561	3,776	4,352

[1] To end March.

Central Statistical Office

Ms Corston: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what account he took of the proposed merger between the Central Statistical Office and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys announced in his answer of 25 April to the hon. Member for Southport (Mr. Banks), *Official Report*, columns *407–08*, of the responsibilities for the preparation and analysis of data about absolute and overall poverty agreed at the world summit for social development in March 1995, with particular reference to articles 18 to 41. [26770]

Mr. Nelson: The purpose of the proposed merger between the Central Statistical Office and the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is to meet a widely perceived need for greater coherence and compatibility in Government statistics, for improved presentation and for easier public access. In making his announcement about the proposed merger by right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor took no specific account of the responsibilities for the preparation and analysis of data about absolute and overall poverty agreed at the world summit for social development in March 1995. The CSO and OPCS are, however, contributing to development of the statistical response to the social summit in the context of the merger proposals.

European Community Budget

Mr. Steen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer for what reasons the words "by command of Her Majesty" did not appear on the front cover of this year's statement on the European Community budget, Cm 2824. [27076]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The information requested was given in the House of Lords in the reply Lord Henley gave to Lord Stoddart of Swindon on 23 May, *Official Report, House of Lords*, column 52.

Biodiesel Fuel

Mr Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what investigations he has carried out into the effect of not announcing the rate of excise duty on biodiesel produced from crops on the development of those fuels under section 11 of the Finance Act 1993. [27089]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: No such investigations have been instituted since those few businesses involved in the production of biofuels have had regular meetings and correspondence with officials in Customs and Excise and are fully aware of the Government's intentions.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the proposed commencement order for excise duty on biodiesel fuels. [26658]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The House will be aware of our obligation to impose excise duty on mineral oil substitutes, such as DERV substitutes from rape methyl ester, which arises from the mineral oil structures directive 92/81/EEC.

A draft of the necessary Treasury order to implement the charge to duty will be set to the interested parties before the House rises for the summer recess. Subject to comments received in response to that draft, the Government's intention is to make the order effective from early autumn.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what factors contributed to changes in the balance of trade with *(a)* France and *(b)* Germany since 1991. [26873]

Mr. Nelson: The balance of trade with France and Germany is affected by a variety of factors, including price and non-price competitiveness, domestic demand, and overseas demand.

Output

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information the Governor of the Bank of England has provided to him in the last year in respect of *(a)* a shortage of productive capacity and *(b)* overheating in any of the import-competing and export industries. [27079]

Mr. Nelson: My right hon. and learned Friend the Chancellor meets regularly with the Governor to discuss the prospects for inflation and the current state of the economy. The Governor's views are reported in the published minutes of the monthly monetary meetings. The Bank also publishes its views in its quarterly inflation report.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the current capacity working of each of the principal importing-competing and export industries. [27084]

Mr. Nelson: Direct quantitative measures of capacity output by industry are not available. However, business survey indicators, for example from the CBI, suggest that capacity utilisation has been rising. This is to be welcomed, provided companies are able to invest when they need to expand capacity.

Churchill Papers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what value was placed on Sir Winston Churchill's papers at the time of his death; and if duty was paid thereon. [26863]

Sir George Young: As with any such matter, the normal rules concerning taxpayer confidentiality prevent me from giving details of the tax affairs of a particular individual.

EMPLOYMENT

International Labour Organisation

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the United Kingdom's annual subscription to the International Labour Organisation. [26849]

Mr. Portillo: The UK's contribution to the ILO for 1994 amounted to £7,921,651.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much the International Labour Organisation's annual meeting will cost *(a)* the International Labour Organisation and *(b)* the United Kingdom. [26851]

Mr. Portillo: The ILO has made provision in its budget of $5.4 million to cover the costs of this year's international labour conference in Geneva. The UK contributes to those costs through its subscription to the ILO. The cost of sending UK delegation to the conference is estimated to be about £58,000.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the cost to public funds of trade unions' attendance at the International Labour Organisation annual meeting. [26852]

Mr. Portillo: The cost to public funds is estimated to be £18,000.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the benefits to the United Kingdom of membership of the International Labour Organisation. [26853]

Mr. Portillo: In recent years, the ILO's purchase of goods and services for its technical co-operation programmes has provided consultants and others in the United Kingdom with financial benefits of about £2.25 million per annum.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the total budget of the International Labour Organisation. [26854]

Mr. Portillo: The ILO's total budget for 1995 is 334,214,933 Swiss francs, which represents about £176.8 million at current exchange rates.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the impact of the United Kingdom's membership of the International Labour Organisation on the rate of United Kingdom unemployment. [26859]

Mr. Portillo: The United Kingdom's membership of the ILO has no impact on the rate of unemployment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the format and purpose of the International Labour Organisation's annual meeting. [26860]

Mr. Portillo: The ILO's annual conference takes place every June and lasts for three weeks. National delegations consist of trade union, employer and Government representations. All the costs are met by Governments. Each year, the conference aims to adopt new conventions which, if ratified, apply to labour markets throughout the world.

International Labour Organisation

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the steps the Government have taken to denounce convention 101 of the International Labour Organisation; if he will set out the date on which the Government took each step to denounce convention 101; and if he will list all remaining steps that have to be taken in order for convention 101 to be fully denounced by the United Kingdom Government; [27164]

(2) if he will list the steps the Government has taken to denounce convention 99 of the International Labour Organisation; if he will set out the date on which the Government took each step to denounce convention 99; and if he will list all remaining steps that have to be taken in order for convention 99 to be fully denounced by the United Kingdom Government. [27163]

Miss Widdecombe: The opportunity to denounce ILO conventions arises only once in every 10 years. There is a 12-month period during which each convention can be denounced. In the case of convention 99, that period began on 23 August 1993. In accordance with the procedure provided under ILO convention 144, the Government wrote to the CBI and TUC to seek their views on 1 July 1993. The Government announced their decision to denounce the convention on 20 July 1994 and formally notified the ILO on 16 August 1994. The denunciation was registered by the ILO on 16 August 1994 and will take effect on 16 August 1995, one year after registration.

Staff

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many posts were lost in *(a)* the Employment Department and *(b)* agencies for which the Employment Department is responsible, listing the total lost posts agency by agency in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and how many posts are proposed to be lost in 1995–96. [25083]

Miss Widdecombe: The information is not available in the form requested. Figures for the Employment Department group's overall staff numbers are contained in the Department's annual report, a copy of which is in the Library.

Fair Pay

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the Council of Europe's policy on fair pay. [25000]

Miss Widdecombe: The Council of Europe's social charter includes provisions calling for "fair remuneration". The Council of Europe's Committee of Experts is responsible for interpreting the social charter. However, the experts' view of what constitutes fair remuneration has never been endorsed by any member state within the Council of Europe, and the experts are currently reviewing their policy on this matter.

Part-time Workers

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* males and *(b)* females were employed part time in each year since 1987; and what percentage of total employment this represents. [26282]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested is provided in the following table:

Part-time employment[1] in Great Britain at spring of each year

Thousand

Year	*Males*	*Per cent. of total employment[2]*	Females	Per cent. of total employment
1987	643	2.6	4,587	18.8
1988	710	2.8	4,689	18.6
1989	719	2.8	4,823	18.5
1990	772	2.9	4,834	18.4
1991	784	3.1	4,842	18.8
1992	978	3.9	4,920	19.5
1993	1,004	4.0	4,967	19.9
1994	1,081	4.3	5,036	20.0

[1] This comprises of employees, self-employed, participants on Government employment and training programmes and unpaid family workers.
[2] Male and female employment.

All figures are adjusted for seasonal variation.
Source:
Labour force survey.

Contracting Out

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment for each piece of work subject to a building process under the auspices of *(a)* his Department and *(b)* agencies for which his Department is responsible (i) who the successful bidders were where work was contracted out and (ii) which contracts were won by in-house bidders in (1) 1993–94, (2) 1994–95 and (3) 1995–96. [25543]

Miss Widdecombe: The following table provides details of completed market tests undertaken by the Department and its agency, the Employment Service, as part of the Government's "Competing for Quality" programme for 1993–94, 1994–95 and 1995–96.

1993–94 competing for quality programme

	Activity	*Outcomes*
Employment Department	Office Services: Records Management	Contracted out (Rockall Data Services)
	Design Studio	Retained in-house
	Journals and three facility houses	Retained in-house
	Information Systems Services	Retained in-house

1993–94 competing for quality programme

	Activity	*Outcomes*
Employment Department *cont.*	Office Services: Post and Messengers	Retained in-house
	Management Services	Retained in-house
	Library Services	Retained in-house
	Training and Development (London)	Retained in-house
	Training and Development (Sheffield)	Retained in-house
Employment Service	Field Staff Training: First Aid	Contracted out (British Red Cross)
	Buildings Maintenance and New Works	Contracted out (Simons Facilities Management PLC Graham and Stibbald Peter, Fall Cowie Associate HSB Partners Drivers, Jonas WS Atkins Procord Ltd Watts and Partners)
	Field Staff Training: Procedural Training	Retained in-house
	Internal Audit	Retained in-house
	Recruitment (London and South East Region)	Retained in-house
	Management Services	Retained in-house
	IT Small Systems	Retained in-house
	Field Staff Training: Management and People Development	7 regions—retained in-house 2 regions—contracted out (Manchester College of Art and Technology)
	Regional Office Support Services	6 regions—retained in-house 3 regions—contracted out (Burns International)
Health and Safety Executive	Library and Information Services	Retained in-house
1994–95		
Health and Safety Executive	Field Support, Norwich	Contracted out (Manpower PLC)
1995–96		
Tests not yet completed		

Graduate Unemployment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) of 9 May, *Official Report*, columns *437-38*, on training and employment, if he will break down the information by region.

Mr. Paice: Regional information on graduate unemployment, on the ILO definition, is given in the following table. Information on the proportion of trainees on government training programmes who move from their training into related areas of employment is not available at regional level.

ILO Unemployed Graduates of working age by region

Autumn 1994 (Great Britain, not seasonally adjusted)

Great Britain: 185,000
North: N/A
Yorks and Humber: 19,000
East Midlands: 12,000
East Anglia: N/A
South East: 73,000
South West: 14,000
West Midlands: 10,000
North West: 17,000
Wales: N/A
Scotland: 17,000

Source: Labour force survey.

N/A—not available, estimate below 10,000.

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26239]

Miss Widdecombe: Performance commitments for responses to inquiries from the public are included in statements of service standards issued by the main providers of services to the public within the Employment Department group. These commitments and the methods of monitoring performance against them vary according to the nature of the service provided. Particular commitments, and the latest available figures for achievement against those commitments, are as follows:

Employment Service

Commitment: responses to letters within five working days

Achievement: achieved in 98.7 per cent. of cases

Commitment: telephone calls answered within 30 seconds

Achievement: achieved in 99.4 per cent. of cases—in sample survey

Health and Safety Executive

Commitment: responses to all enquiries or complaints within 10 working days

Achievement: achieved in 96 per cent. of cases

Redundancy Payments Service

Commitment: responses to letters within five working days

Achievement: achieved in 100 per cent. of cases.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people were employed in *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* service industries in each year since 1987. [26197]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested is provided in the following table:

Employees in United Kingdom: December of each year (thousands[1])

Year	Manufacturing Industries	Service Industries
1987	5,191	14,904
1988	5,224	15,423
1989	5,190	15,819
1990	4,976	15,948
1991	4,607	15,723
1992	4,366	15,608
1993	4,353	15,795
1994	4,369	15,906

[1]Seasonally adjusted.

Source:

Workforce in Employment series.

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the number and proportion of (i) men and (ii) women in each region who were unemployed or economically inactive aged *(a)* 16 to 19, *(b)* 20 to 24, *(c)* 25 to 34 and *(d)* 35 to 49 years; and if he will also give the figures for (i) women between 30 and 59, (ii) men between 50 and 64, (iii) women over 60 and (iv) men over 65 years in each year since 1979. [26086]

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 25 May 2995]:* For years 1984 onwards, this information is available from the labour force survey and can be obtained via the Quantime LFS service available in the Library.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people receive from full-time work *(a)* £30,000 to £35,000, *(b)* £35,000 to £50,000, *(c)* £50,000 to £75,000, *(d)* £75,000 to £100,000 and *(e)* over £100,000 a year; and what are *(a)* to *(e)* as a percentage of the employed population. [26148]

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* Estimated numbers of full-time employees are given in the following table:

£	Estimated Number Full-time Employees	Per Cent. of Full-time Employed Population
30,000 to 35,000	452,000	3.0
35,000 to 50,000	460,000	3.0
50,000 to 75,000	145,000	0.7
75,000 to 100,000	29,000	0.2
over 100,000	19,000	0.1

Source:

New earnings survey April 1994 and employees in employment March 1994.

Complaints

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what policy and procedures exist for dealing with complaints against his Department by members of the public; when the policy was last updated; what time limit and target for dealing with such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedure exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint. [26223]

Miss Widdecombe: Complaints procedures are set out in individual statements of service standards published by organisations with the Employment Department group which provide services to the public. The main such statements, the date at which they were last updated and the nature of the follow-up procedures where complainants are not satisfied are as follows:

Service	Title of statement	Last Updated	Follow-up Procedure
Employment Service	Jobseeker's Charter	June 1994	Write to Chief Executive
Health and Safety Executive	HSE and You	January 1994	Write to Director General
	HSE—Working for Employers	January 1994	Write to Director General
Redundancy Payments Service	Redundancy Payments Service Charter	February 1994	Write to manager of relevant office

Responses to complaints are dealt with according to the time scales applying to other forms of inquiry from members of the public, as described in my reply to the hon. Member today.

Investors in People

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers currently holding Investor in People status employ *(a)* people with disabilities, *(b)* members of ethnic minorities and *(c)* women, indicating if each category forms (i) zero to 25 per cent., (ii) 26 to 50 per cent., (iii) 51 to 75 per cent. and (iv) 76 to 100 per cent. of the workforce (1) for each of his Department's regions and (2) nationally. [26506]

Mr. Paice: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers, and of what size, currently hold Investor in People status; and what these constitute as a percentage of all employers of that size in the area *(a)* for each of his Department's regions and *(b)* nationally. [26502]

Mr. Paice: At 26 March 1995, over 1,453 employers in England were recognised as Investors in People. Of these, 446 were companies with over 200 employees; 1,007 with under 200 employees. In excess of 16,000 further employers are committed to achieving IiP status.

The percentage of organisations with over 200 employees in England recognised as IiP is 6 per cent. of the target groups agreed with training and enterprise councils. The regional breakdown is shown in the following table:

Region	Per cent.
Eastern	5
East Midlands	7
London	2
Merseyside	7
North East	8
North West	6

Employment Service Barnoldswick

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what facilities are available at the local library in Barnoldswick for persons wishing to use the services of the Employment Service and which have been added or withdrawn since the closure of the town's jobcentre. [26564]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 6 June 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me, in the absence of the Chief Executive, to reply to your question regarding the provision and withdrawal of services provided by the Employment Service (ES) at Barnoldswick library.

Since the closure of the town's Jobcentre, the ES has provided a vacancy display facility and a Freephone service connected to Colne Jobcentre at the local library. The facility was initially staffed on a part-time basis between 9.30 am and 11.30 am on Mondays and Wednesdays. This was reduced to Wednesdays some two years ago.

The facility has not been used to any significant extent and the decision was recently taken to withdraw the part-time staff presence from the library, with effect from 10 May.

The vacancy display which is updated twice a week and Freephone service are still available to people using the library. The Freephone number is available for use by the public outside the library's opening hours.

I hope this is helpful.

Sheep dipping

Mr. McCartney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the Health and Safety Executive will recommend appropriate personal protective equipment for sheep farmers to give full protection against organophosphate chemicals. [26490]

Mr. Oppenheim: The Government's guidance in its free "Sheep Dipping" leaflet recommends both what personal protective equipment is appropriate for farmers when dipping sheep with organophosphate products and the steps for its proper use.

Wearing personal protective equipment is, of course, only one of the measures to protect farmers and others against exposure to hazardous substances. Those include only dipping when necessary; and, where dips have to be used, planning carefully the design and siting of the facilities, using appropriate engineering controls; and, where protective clothing becomes heavily contaminated, washing and putting on clean clothes.

Atomic Weapons Establishments

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will place in the Library copies of all improvement or prohibition notices served by the Health and Safety Executive on the atomic weapons establishments at Aldermaston, Burghfield, Cardiff and Foulness; and if he will continue to ensure that all future notices serviced on these establishments are placed in the Library as and when they are served. [26371]

Mr. Oppenheim: Entries for all the notices served by the Health and Safety Executive on the atomic weapons establishments are in the public register at HSE's south area office at Basingstoke. Exceptionally I have asked HSE to forward copies of these entries to the Library. The public register entries consist of a copy of the notice. Some material has been removed for reasons of national security. Information about further notices will be available at that office.

Pathfinder Careers Services

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he intends to publish the findings, referred to on page 6, paragraph 107 of the "Impact of New Management Arrangements in New Pathfinder Careers Services" report, of his investigation into the management of the contractual relationship between his Department and the pathfinders; and if he will make a statement. [26503]

Mr. Paice: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has no plans to publish the information referred to. The published report contains the main findings. Publication of findings concerning the contractual relationship between the Employment Department and the pathfinder careers services would be inappropriate.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the proposed commencement date of the 16 guided learning hours provision embraced in the Jobseekers Bill. [26610]

Miss Widdecombe: I will write to the hon. Member as soon as possible and place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if employment service officials will have the power between 1 April 1996 and the implementation date of jobseeker's allowance to issue a jobseeker's direction to claimants. [26612]

Miss Widdecombe: No; but claimants will continue to be subject to sanction if they refuse or fail to carry out an official recommendation given with a view to assisting them find a particular type of employment.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if new claimants between 1 April 1996 and the implementation date of jobseeker's allowance will have to sign a jobseeker's agreement as a condition of benefit or if they will continue to be issued with the advisory back-to-work plan. [26611]

Miss Widdecombe: The jobseeker's agreement will be introduced when jobseeker's allowance is implemented in October 1996. The voluntary back-to-work plan will continue to be used until then. Different versions and processes will be tested in a small number of offices on a voluntary basis within the existing legislation in order to help plan the smooth introduction of JSA.

Unemployment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what targets he has set for the rate of unemployment. [26533]

Mr. Oppenheim: The Government pursue policies designed to achieve high levels of employment and low inflation. However, I do not believe that it is sensible to set a particular rate of unemployment as a target for these policies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* full-time and *(b)* part-time jobs would have to be created in the absence of special Government measures to reduce unemployment to the same level as in the fourth quarter of 1973 on the same definition. [27025]

Mr. Oppenheim: There is not a simple relationship between the number of jobs and the level of unemployment, because of changes in the population of working age and activity rates. The following table shows that claimant unemployment is higher than in 1973, but the number in employment is also larger.

Work-force in employment and claimant unemployment, United Kingdom, seasonally adjusted

Date	Workforce in employment 000's	Of which: Part time employees[2] 000's	Of which: Work related govt training programmes[3] 000's	Claimant Unemployed[4] 000's	Unemployment rate Percentage
June 1973[4]	25,209	3,891	[1]—	534	2.1
June 1974[4]	25,280	4,183	[1]—	513	2.0
December 1994	25,604	6,222	304	2,419	8.6
April 1995	n/a	n/a	n/a	2,328	8.3

Source: "Employment Gazette"
n/a: not available
Notes:
[1] Consistent with the current definition.
[2] There are also part-time self-employed workers but for the UK figures are available only for employees. Participants in work related government training programmes are all considered to be part-time members of the workforce in employment.
[3] Includes participants on government training and employment programmes who receive some work experience on their placement but who do not have a contract of employment. Participants with a contract are included as employees.
[4] Figures that are comparable and consistent with the current coverage of the "Workforce in Employment" statistics are not available on a quarterly basis before 1978. Therefore, the figures for June 1973 and June 1974 are given to provide the most comprehensive information available for the last quarter of 1973.

Industry Training Organisations

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to *(a)* increase and *(b)* reduce the number of (i) industry training organisations, (ii) lead bodies, (iii) awarding bodies and (iv) occupational standards councils; and if he will make a statement. [26505]

Mr. Paice: The Department has no plans to change the numbers of industry training organisations, lead bodies, awarding bodies or occupational standards councils.

It is for groups of employers to decide whether to apply to the Department for recognition as an ITO. Equally, it is for groups of employers or others to decide whether they wish to act as a lead body or to participate in an occupational standards council.

The Department does not have powers to recognise awarding bodies. The National Council for Vocational Qualifications sets strict criteria for organisations wanting to award national vocational qualifications.

Job Insecurity

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures he will introduce to alleviate job insecurity among United Kingdom employees. [26360]

Miss Widdecombe: To alleviate job insecurity, businesses must be able to create jobs and individuals must be able to adapt to structural and technological change. The Government's economic policies provide the framework for sustained growth in jobs, and our employment and training measures help individuals find jobs and develop their skills and aptitudes It is also important to remove unnecessary burdens on employers which deter them from creating new jobs as sales and output rise. The Uk now has one of the most flexible and deregulated labour markets in Europe. It also has:

a higher proportion of its adult population in work than in any other major European country;

fewer people out of work and claiming benefits than any other major European country; and

one of the lowest proportions of temporary workers in Europe.

We shall continue to resist measures such as the social chapter, a national minimum wage and a compulsory training levy which would put jobs at risk and add unnecessarily to job insecurity.

Sewer Maintenance

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure safe working practices for operatives engaged in sewer maintenance. [26718]

Mr. Oppenheim: Primary responsibility for setting up and monitoring safe working practices for operatives engaged in sewer maintenance rests with the employers of operatives. The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 requires all employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees. Health and Safety Executive inspectors enforce health and safety legislation in the water industry.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the Health and Safety Executive last issued guidance for safe working practices for operatives engaged in sewer maintenance. [26717]

Mr. Oppenheim: The Health and Safety Executive issued updated guidance in August 1994 on safe working practices in all confined spaces, including sewers and enclosed drains. A guidance package on occupational health risks for sewage is in preparation.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many inspections were made last year by health and safety inspectors of contractors working on sewer maintenance. [26719]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information is not available in the form requested. However, provisional figures indicate that inspectors made some 104 visits to sewage disposal activities in 1994-95.

Disabled People

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what additional steps to enlarge opportunities for persons with disability are needed to conform with the declaration and action programme agreed at the Copenhagen world summit for social development in March, with particular reference to article 62. [26760]

Miss Widdecombe: The preambles to both the declaration and the programme of action make clear that the implementation of the summit recommendations at national level is subject to national legislation and priorities. United Kingdom policies and programmes to enlarge employment opportunities for people with disabilities are already kept under review to ensure that they respond quickly and effectively to changing national needs and circumstances.

The Department has a wide range of employment and training services, programmes—including supported employment—and initiatives, which help enhance the employment opportunities for people with disabilities and assist disabled people to obtain and retain employment.

The Disability Discrimination Bill introduced by the Government, will, when enacted, make it unlawful for employers, with 20 or more employees to discriminate against disabled people in any area of employment. Employers will also be under a duty to make a reasonable adjustment to working conditions or to the workplace where a disabled person would otherwise be at a substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled people.

Worker Co-operatives

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is his estimate of the number of jobs that have been created in worker co-operatives in the UK since the passing of the Industrial Common Ownership Act 1976; and what research he has conducted on the survival rate of new start worker co-operatives and on comparisons with the survival rates of traditional forms of small new start business. [26924]

Mr. Oppenheim: I regret that this information is not available.

ENVIRONMENT

Consultants

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the level of expenditure on consultancy by *(a)* the Department of the Environment and *(b)* agencies for which the Department is responsible for (i) 1993-94, (ii) 1994-95 and (iii) projected for 1995-96. [25525]

Sir Paul Beresford: Expenditure on consultancies by my Department and its agencies, excluding IT consultancies, is £10.394 million in 1993–94, £10.882 million in 1994–95, and is forecast to be £13.875 million in 1995-96.

Departmental Performance

Mr Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26328]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Department has a target of replying to all letters from the public, including individuals, businesses and local authorities, within 15 working days of the letter being received by the department. Since April 1994, the Department has been developing procedures for monitoring performance against that target, which are overseen by the management board of the Department.

The Department has no quantitative target for the answering of telephone calls by all departmental staff and performance data are not centrally monitored. The Department's public inquiry unit has targets for several aspects of their answering of telephone calls and their performance against these targets is monitored daily and reported on annually to senior management.

Business Rates

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what percentage of business premises in England as a whole and in each local authority in England have qualified for transitional uniform business rate relief continuously, each year, since the 1987 business rates revaluation; [25967]

(2) what was the percentage of business premises in England as a whole and in each local authority in England that qualified for transitional uniform business rate relief following the *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1992 revaluation; and if he will list the local authorities in order according to the percentage qualifying for transitional relief at each revaluation; [25970]

(3) what was the average percentage increase in rateable values for business premises in England as a whole and in each local authority in England following the *(a)* 1987 and *(b)* 1993 revaluation; and if he will list the local authorities in order according to the average percentage increase at each revaluation. [25969]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: There were no revaluations in 1987 or 1992. The 1990 revaluation of non-domestic property was based on rents in 1988. The 1995 revaluation, which came into force on 1 April, is based on rents in 1993. The tables, copies of which will be placed in the Library, show:

the percentage of non-domestic properties moving to higher bills which have qualified for transitional relief continuously since 1990;

the average percentage increase in rateable value of non-domestic properties following each of the revaluations; and,

the percentage of non-domestic properties moving to higher bills which qualified for transitional relief in the first year after each of the revaluations.

Underground Car Parks

Mr. Pike: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals there are to include benzene and particulates in the regulations concerning ventilation in underground car parks; and if he will make a statement. [26173]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: On 1 July this year, new building regulations for the ventilation of non-domestic buildings including underground car parks come into force. Guidance is contained in the 1995 edition of the approved document for part F of the Building Regulations. The provisions are based on the amount of ventilation needed to reduce the level of pollutants generally, rather than setting specific limits for individual pollutants such as benzene or particulates. The guidance is kept under review and research is being undertaken to monitor the effectiveness of the provisions in reducing such pollutants.

Occupational exposure limits for benzene and other constituents of vehicle exhaust emissions are controlled by the Health and Safety Commission. The current occupational exposure limits are considered adequate to control the risk of ill health to employees in underground car parks. If appropriate measures are taken to control employees' exposure to the main constituents of vehicle exhaust emissions below the relevant occupational exposure limits, their exposure to other substances hazardous to health in the emissions are also likely to be controlled to levels below which there is unlikely to be any risk to their health.

Air quality is one of the Government's environmental priorities. In January this year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment published "Air Quality: Meeting the Challenge", which sets out the Government's strategic policies for air quality management, including a pledge to set air quality standards for nine major pollutants, among which are benzene and particulates.

Complaints

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what policy and procedures exists for dealing which complaints against his Department by members of the public; when the policy was last updated; what time limit and target for dealing which such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedure exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint. [26222]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Department's complaints handling procedures were revised in April 1994. A departmental service commitment explains what steps are open to members of the public to wish to make a complaint. These steps include the opportunity to refer a complaint to the departmental complaints unit.

The Department's target for responding to letters of complaint is, as for all letters from the public, that a reply should be sent within 15 working days of the letter being received.

Any member of the public who is dissatisfied with the way the Department has dealt with their complaint may ask a Member of Parliament to submit their complaint to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration for investigation and review.

Inheritances

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average value of inheritance other than of surviving spouses and excluding all inheritances of under £1,000 in England since 1990. [26568]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I regret that the information is not available.

Green Belt

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to prevent damage to the green belt by intrusive agricultural development. [26535]

Sir Paul Beresford: The visual amenities of the green belt should not be injured by proposals for development which, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in green belts, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design. This is a material factor which local planning authorities should take into account in considering planning applications. For smaller agricultural buildings which do not require a planning application, local planning authorities have discretion to control siting, design and external appearance.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures are available in circumstances where local authorities fail to provide adequate details of potential sites for development in urban areas when consideration is given to the use of green belt land for development purposes. [26672]

Sir Paul Beresford: If a proposed development is inappropriate to a green belt, it is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary for Environment if he will make a statement on the reasons used to decide whether to link questions for oral answer. [26427]

Mr. Gummer: Questions are usually linked when they are on closely related issues in very close proximity in the order paper, and the hon. Members concerned do not object.

Sewerage Services

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it a requirement that sewerage undertakers publish and enforce guidance for safe working practices in their operations in their areas. [26720]

Mr. Atkins: Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 requires every employer of more than five employees to prepare and keep up to date a written statement of his general policy with respect to the health and safety at work of his employees and arrangements for carrying out that policy, and to bring that statement and any revision of it to the notice of all his employees.

Mrs Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will ensure that where sewerage work is contracted out by the statutory undertakers the undertaker retains responsibility for enforcing safe working practices within their contract specifications. [26721]

Mr. Atkins: The Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 requires all employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees. The Health and Safety Executive is responsible for enforcing health and safety legislation in the water industry.

Noise

Mr. Fraser: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what further steps his Department proposes to take to deal with the problem of noise nuisance by neighbours; and what plans he has to present legislation on the issue. [26771]

Sir Paul Beresford: We continue to encourage informal resolution of neighbour noise problems, wherever possible, while recognising that in some cases formal enforcement action is necessary. The conclusions and recommendations of an interdepartmental working party on neighbour noise set up to review the effectiveness of controls under the current law were issued as a consultation paper at the end of March. The recommendations include proposals for a specific power of temporary confiscation of noise-making equipment and a new nighttime noise offence based on World Health Organisation guidelines. We will consider the comments on these proposals before deciding whether to proceed with legislation.

Construction Industry

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what plans he has to introduce legislation for construction contracts; [26687]

(2) what steps he will take to assist and protect construction industries prior to a legislative response to the Latham report. [26688]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to the hon. Member for Coventry, North-East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 16 May 1995, *Official Report*, column *176*.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the costs to construction industries arising out of late payment; and if he will make a statement on the implications this has for employment and training.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I am not aware of any estimate by the construction industry of these costs.

Proposed Development, Wakefield

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration was given to the complaints raised by Crigglestone parish council prior to the decision to remove green belt land designation for development purposes at junction 39, M1 motorway, in Wakefield. [26747]

Sir Paul Beresford: The parish council's objections were considered at the public local inquiry into the Wakefield unitary development plan. The Secretary of State has no records of complaints being made prior to the adoption of the plan on 6 December 1994.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what information was provided about alternative sites for proposed development in the case of land at junction 39, M1 motorway, in Wakefield. [26673]

Sir Paul Beresford: This is a matter considered during the preparation of, and at the public local inquiry into, the Wakefield unitary plan. The Secretary of State has been fully consulted about the plan and has been satisfied with the information given.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the cost of the inspector's investigation into an application to remove land from the green belt for development at junction 39, M1 motorway, in Wakefield. [26651]

Sir Paul Beresford: The cost of the public local inquiry into objections to the Wakefield unitary development plan is a matter for Wakefield metropolitan council and the Planning Inspectorate Agency. I have asked the agency's director to write separately to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. Greenfield to Mr. David Hinchliffe, dated 2 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for the Environment has asked me to reply to your question about the cost of the Inspector's report on objections to the removal of land from green belt for development at junction 39 of the M1 in Wakefield. This formed part of the public inquiry into objections to the Wakefield Unitary Development Plan, which closed on 27 January 1993 after 61 sitting days.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to say what was the exact cost of the Inspector's consideration of these particular objections. I understand that approximately 1.5 inquiry days were occupied in hearing representations on this objection also, and additional time would have been spent in producing the Inspector's report. The fee charged per Inspector day was £285, plus some £85 per day in travel and subsistence costs where appropriate.

On the basis of the then current Planning Inspectorate guideline of 3 reporting days per inquiry sitting/site visit day, the Inspector would have spent some 4 to 5 days reporting on the oral and written representations relating to the site. The total cost would thus have been some £1,800.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the information on potential development sites, outside of green belt, in urban areas, when consideration was given to development proposals at junction 39 of the M1 motorway in Wakefield. [26669]

Sir Paul Beresford: The matter was considered at the public local inquiry into objections to the Wakefield unitary development plan. The Secretary of State has been fully consulted at every stage of the plan's preparation. He has scrutinised the proposals, having regard to national and regional policy advice, and was content with the plan at the time of adoption.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of state for the Environment if it will be necessary to hold elections for a shadow council for those unitary authorities whose boundaries are coterminous with the boundary of the existing district councils.

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Where an authority gaining unitary status is coterminous with an existing county or district council, it will be a continuing authority and there will be no need for a shadow council. There is no statutory requirement for fresh elections to an authority in this position, other than as part of the normal electoral cycle, but it is our policy to require fresh elections to be held for the whole council in the year before reorganisation, to ensure that planning and implementation of unitary functions is done on the basis of a fresh mandate.

Water Authorities

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment which local authorities are served by more than one water authority. [26705]

Mr. Atkins: This information is not held centrally.

Sefton Park Palm House

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will make a statement on the future of the Sefton Park palm house, Liverpool; [26908]

(2) what European regional development fund funding and English Heritage funding is available towards the restoration of the Sefton Park palm house.

Sir Paul Beresford: The works carried out in 1993 under the urban programme funded rescue package—£254,000—secured the structure in the short term, allowing time for detailed proposals to be drawn up for future sustainable use as part of an overall tourism strategy.

The Government office for Merseyside has received an application for ERDF grant assistance for a development study and business plan. This application is currently being appraised.

I understand that English Heritage has made an offer of funding towards eligible works on the palm house.

Local Investment Fund

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what investment in small businesses has resulted since the launch of the local investment fund in 1994; what action has been taken to publicise the existance of the local investment fund; what steps the Government are taking to increase investment in the fund; and if he will make a statement. [26914]

Sir Paul Beresford: This is a matter for the management of the local investment fund. The local investment fund was established by means of a £1 million grant from the Department of the Environment matched by £2 million from the private sector in grants and loans. It is a registered charity operating independently of Government.

North Sea

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to extend his commitments on protection of the North sea to all waters around the UK. [26870]

Mr. Atkins: It is long-standing Government policy to apply obligations under successive North sea conferences to all our waters. This commitment will apply equally to any steps agreed by the fourth North sea conference on 8 and 9 June, within the framework for implementing measures for the north-east Atlantic under the 1992 OSPAR convention.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what commitment he plans to make to protect the North sea beyond the 200-mile limit of territorial waters. [26871]

Mr. Atkins: All the North sea is within 200 nautical miles of the coasts of one or other of the North sea states: their jurisdictions over the area between the 12-mile limit to territorial waters and the 200-mile limit—which are recognised by international law—therefore provides a major underpinning for measures to protect the North sea agreed through the North sea conferences. We have also signed the convention for the protection of the marine environment of the north-east Atlantic which provides a comprehensive framework for protecting the seas north of 36°N, the latitude of the straits of Gibraltar, and east of 42°W, the longitude of the southern tip of Greenland, as far as the straits between Denmark and Sweden.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy to raise the issue of controlling pollution from ships at the forthcoming North sea ministerial conference; what policy proposals he has to suggest; and if he will make a statement. [26361]

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 24 May 1995]:* Pollution from shipping is one of the issues which the conference will consider. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in the House on 16 May, *Official Report*, column *183*, what we hope the conference will achieve in all of the areas it will cover, including shipping. A UK note on the conference was placed in the Library of the House.

Proposed Theatre, Ilfracombe

Mr. Harvey: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what representations he has received urging him to call in the planning application for a new pavilion theatre and winter garden at Ilfracombe, North Devon; [26907]

(2) if he will take into consideration the time scale pressure on funding opportunities for the construction of a new pavilion theatre and winter garden at Ilfracombe, North Devon, in deciding whether to call in the planning application for the development. [26906]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State has given careful consideration to the representations received from English Heritage about the design and impact of the proposals for a new theatre and winter garden at Ilfracombe. He has decided to leave the planning decision to North Devon district council and appropriate notification was issued by the Government office for the south-west on 2 June.

Direct Labour and Service Organisations

Mr. Duncan Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action he proposes to take against those local authorities whose direct labour and direct service organisations failed to meet their statutory financial objectives in 1993–94. [27024]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: On 28 February this year, 38 statutory notices were served on 19 local authorities concerning the failure of their direct labour and service organisations to meet the required financial objective in 1993–94.

My right hon. Friend has now considered the responses to those notices, and has today given directions to Bradford city council, highways and sewers; Brent LBC, highways and sewers; Calderdale MBC, building maintenance; Charnwood borough council, building maintenance and grounds maintenance; Durham county council, grounds maintenance, other catering and building maintenance; Great Grimsby borough council, highways and sewers; Hammersmith and Fulham LBC, grounds maintenance, Lambeth LBC, building cleaning; Liverpool city council, highways and sewers, grounds maintenance and other cleaning; Newham LBC, grounds maintenance; North Devon district council, building maintenance;

South Northamptonshire district council, building maintenance, other cleaning and sports and leisure management; Southend-on-Sea borough council, highways and sewers; Waltham Forest LBC, building maintenance and grounds maintenance; and Wigan MBC, building maintenance.

These directions take five different forms:

preventing the authority from carrying out the work from 1 April 1996: Bradford city council, highways and sewers.

Requiring an authority to retender all or part of the work, and to seek the Secretary of State's prior consent should they wish to award the work in-house. The work would need to be retendered or a new contract would need to have been awarded by specific dates: Calderdale, building maintenance; Durham, grounds maintenance and other catering; Hammersmith and Fulham, grounds maintenance; Lambeth, building cleaning; Newham, grounds maintenance; and South Northamptonshire, building maintenance and sports and leisure management.

preventing the authority from carrying out the work if it fails to meet the required financial objective a specified financial year or years:

1994–95: Brent, highways and sewers.

1995–96: Charnwood, building maintenance; Waltham Forest, grounds maintenance, and Wigan, building maintenance.

1995–96 and 1996–97: Liverpool, highways and sewers and grounds maintenance, and Waltham Forest, building maintenance.

requiring an authority to retender the work if it fails to meet the required financial objective in a specified financial year, and to seek the Secretary of State's prior consent where the work has to be retendered and where the authority subsequently wish to award the work in-house:

1994–95: Charnwood, grounds maintenance and North Devon, building maintenance.

1995–96: Durham, building maintenance; Grimsby, highways and sewers; South Northamptonshire, other cleaning, and Southend-on-Sea, highways and sewers.

requiring an authority to submit quarterly monitoring reports up to March 1997: Liverpool, other cleaning.

The Secretary of State has also decided to take no further statutory action in respect of financial failure in 1993–94 by:

Bournemouth, building maintenance, vehicle maintenance; Durham, new construction over £50,000; Grimsby, refuse collection/other cleaning; Havering, building cleaning; Hillingdon, building maintenance; Lambeth, grounds maintenance; Liverpool, other catering; Merton, sports and leisure management; North Devon, other cleaning; Southend-on-Sea, building maintenance, and Waltham Forest, building cleaning and other catering; Waltham Forest, sports and leisure management; and Brent, sports and leisure management.

This is the first of four announcements that I shall be making between now and October about the action that is being taken against local authorities that failed to meet their financial objectives in 1993–94.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration has been given to the dispersal of low-level radioactive waste at sites in *(a)* the Sherwood constituency and *(b)* Nottinghamshire; and if he will make a statement. [26876]

Mr. Atkins: At present no low-level radioactive waste is authorised for disposal at any landfill site in Nottinghamshire, and my Department has no knowledge of any future plans in this regard.

The Radioactive Substances Act 1993 regulates the disposal of all radioactive waste. Before anyone disposes of this waste, other than under the terms of an exemption order, he must apply to Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution for authorisation under the Act, and the application is made public. HMIP will grant authorisation only if it is fully satisfied that the public is properly protected.

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made towards the 15 per cent. energy saving target for the Government estate; and when he intends to publish the Government's latest review of progress on a Department-by-Department basis. [27158]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Surrey, East (Mr. Ainsworth) on 17 May 1995, *Official Report*, columns *260-62*.

Mr. Robathan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what target date he has set for the achievement of the 15 per cent. energy saving target for the Government estate. [27157]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The answer is 31 March 1996.

Asbestos

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to ensure that asbestos-based products are not used in construction. [25865]

Mr. Oppenheim: I have been asked to reply.

The use of products containing the most dangerous types of asbestos, brown and blue, and many construction products containing white asbestos is prohibited. The few remaining uses of white asbestos based products in construction are subject to the provisions of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 1987, as amended in 1992. Those require employers to prevent exposure to asbestos, where it is practicable, by substituting products containing asbestos for less harmful products.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Home Visits

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security (1) what is the purpose of proposed home visits by Benefits Agency staff; [26249]

(2) what instructions he has given to Benefits Agency staff regarding proposed home visits; [26247]

(3) how many home visits by Benefits Agency staff are proposed in the current year. [26248]

Mr. Roger Evans: The purposes of home visits by Benefits Agency staff are to clarify and verify details of benefit claims which cannot be easily, or satisfactorily confirmed by post, ensuring that benefit entitlement is expedited accurately and speedily.

Long-standing advice exists for Benefits Agency staff on how to conduct business away from the office. This includes guidance on interview techniques and personal safety. All visiting staff attend specialised training courses, which include a session on how to deal with potentially aggressive situations. In addition, guidance is due to be issued advising how to select, perform and record, new and repeat and "review claim" visits.

There is no overall numerical target set for home visits. Details of the number of visits carried out last year, 1994–95, are set out in the table.

Number of visits to customers in financial year ending March 1995

	Number
New claims visits	57,000
Initial case check (follow up)	32,500
Subsequent case check	64,000
Specialist visits (e.g. by CSA staff)	80,000
Other (may include some fraud related visits)	250,000
Total	483,500

Residential Care and Nursing Homes

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Great Britain aged over 64 years living in *(a)* private residential homes, *(b)* private nursing homes, *(c)* local authority residential homes and *(d)* national health service nursing homes have a spouse living elsewhere. [25977]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information is not available.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in England aged over 64 years live in *(a)* private residential homes, *(b)* private nursing homes, *(c)* local authority residential homes and *(d)* NHS nursing homes; and, of these, how many have the cost of their care paid wholly or partly by (i) their local authority, (ii) their health authority and (iii) the Department of Social Security; and how many pay for their care wholly from private resources. [25978]

Mr. Roger Evans: Information is not available in the form requested. Such information as is available is set out in the table.

Number of Income Support Cases in England where the recipient is aged over 64 in May 1994

Residential Care	76,000
Nursing Homes	71,000
LA Residential Accommodation	6,000
Including Residential Allowance	42,000
Total Cases	194,000

Source: Income Support Quarterly Statistical Enquiry: May 1994.
Notes:
All figures rounded to nearest thousand.
Residential care and nursing homes may be either private or voluntary homes.
Cases under the community care scheme cannot be split between residential care and nursing homes.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines his Department plans to issue to local authorities concerning rent referrals to local rent officers under the proposed changes to housing benefit. [26538]

Mr. Roger Evans: In March this year we issued to all local authorities a circular, HB/CTBA6/95, and a summary of our proposals to take effect from October. Following formal consultation, we are currently considering the report from the social security advisory committee, and the representations from local authority associations, before reaching final decisions. We will then issue further guidance to all local authorities and will keep the need for additional material under review, in line with our normal practice.

Benefit Payment Card

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security by what date the five consortia bidding to act as prime contractors for the automated benefit payment system must submit their proposals; when the Department of Social Security will make its decision; and when he expects the system to be operational. [26369]

Mr. Roger Evans: The five consortia must submit their proposals by 8 June and the Department will make its decision around the end of the year. The first benefit payment cards are expected to be issued in 1996 and the whole implementation process is expected to take up to three years.

Sir Andrew Bowden: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will place in the Library a copy of the automated benefit payment card statement of system requirement. [26368]

Mr. Roger Evans: No. The statement of service requirement is part of the contractual negotiations between the Department and potential service providers, and as such is commercially confidential.

National Insurance Numbers

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many national insurance numbers are in existence; how many national insurance numbers relate to people now deceased; how many national insurance numbers have been issued in each of the past 10 years, other than automatically to 16-year-olds; what are the categories into which those applying for national insurance, other than automatic issue to 16-year-olds, are placed; how many national insurance numbers have been issued in each of those categories in each of the past 10 years; how many prosecutions have been made in each of the last 10 years for fraudulent claims for national insurance numbers; and how many national insurance numbers have been cancelled in each of the last 10 years. [26457]

Mr. Arbuthnot: There are 65,329,198 national insurance numbers held on the departmental central index.

Approximately 8.8 million records relate to people now deceased.

It is possible to state only how many national insurance numbers have been issued in three of the past 10 years in cases other than automatically to 16-year-olds.

1986: 142,964
1987: 155,571
1988: 174,902

This information is not available from 1989 onwards because of changes to the way in which the Department's computer systems operate.

In addition to those national insurance numbers issued automatically to 16-year-olds, applications may come from customers who have arrived from abroad and never been in the UK before or have not been included in the automatic registration process—for example, if child benefit has not been in payment.

It is not possible to state how many national insurance number allocations fall into each category as current

processes do not provide for the collection of this information.

Since records began in 1991 there have been approximately 500 to 550 prosecutions a year involving conspiracy to obtain benefit fraudulently from the Department by the misuse of identity details and national insurance numbers.

The numbers of national insurance numbers cancelled in the past 10 years are as follows:

1986: 7,576
1987: 6,719
1988: 13,763
1989: 10,827
1990: 11,924
1991: 8,878
1992: 13,230
1993: 13,458
1994: 9,344
1995: 5,163 (to date).

Income Support

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if new claimants with a partner who satisfy the contribution conditions between 1 April 1996 and the implementation date of jobseeker's allowance will be eligible for the dependant's addition. [26614]

Mr. Roger Evans: Yes.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if claimants subject to benefit sanctions between 1 April 1996 and the implementation date of the jobseeker's allowance will be eligible for income support hardship payments including during the first two weeks of such a sanction. [26613]

Mr. Roger Evans: The current rules will apply until jobseeker's allowance is introduced in October 1996.

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if new claimants aged under 25 years and satisfying the contribution conditions between 1 April 1996 and the implementation date of jobseeker's allowance will be entitled to the same rate of benefit as those aged over 25 years. [26615]

Mr. Roger Evans: Yes.

Living Standards

Mr. Austin-Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if the statement on page 71, paragraph 6.22 in the Government's White Paper, "Competitiveness—Forging Ahead", in respect of the state not funding improvements in the living standards of individuals in old age represents a change in Government policy; and if he will make a statement. [26902]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Our policy on pensions remains unchanged. We will maintain the value of the basic state pension by increasing it in line with prices, encourage personal responsibility for additional pension provision through occupational and personal pensions and target extra resources on those with a low income.

Child Support Agency

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people in Scotland have been identified by the Child Support Agency as absent parents; what is the average length of stay away from the family home; and how many of the above have *(a)* given no financial support to the family and *(b)* given amounts of money irregularly. [24602]

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member shortly.

Letter from Tony Ward to Mrs. Maria Fyfe, dated 31 May 1995:

In the absence of Miss Chant, the Chief Executive, I am replying to your recent Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about details of the absent parents in Scotland.

From a one per cent sample of the Agency's cases, it is estimated that as at 11 March 1995, 42,200 people living in Scotland had been identified as absent parents (APs). Of these, 29,900 had been assessed to pay child maintenance, 24,200 agreeing to pay through the CSA collection service, and the remaining 5,700 arranging to pay direct to the parent with care (PaWC). In these last cases, the Agency assumes that unless the PaWC advises to the contrary, child maintenance is paid in full.

Of those APs using the collection service, 1,300 had paid child maintenance in full; 2,400 had paid part of the maintenance due; and 12,800 had paid no child maintenance in the previous 13 weeks. Action on the collection accounts had not been completed in the remaining 7,700 cases.

No information is available on the average length of time that an AP stays away from the family home.

I hope this is helpful.

Telephones

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what costs his Department has incurred during the last 12 months as a result of cloning of mobile telephones being utilised by his Department, with particular reference to the making of unauthorised calls. [23497]

Mr. Hague *[holding answer Tuesday 9 May]:* The Department of Social Security recovers all costs when cloning is detected. The supplier VODAC Ltd. monitors and reports on instances of cloning and credits the DSS for any losses occurring from unauthorised usage.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Manslaughter Detainees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *554*, on restricted patients with a hospital order sentenced for manslaughter, where each patient is or was detained. [26153]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Information on all the hospitals in which each patient was detained would involve disproportionate cost. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave her on 23 May 1995 at column *487*, detailing the hospitals to which the patients convicted of manslaughter and given a hospital order were initially admitted. The following table shows the current whereabouts of those patients who were still detained in hospital in December 1994.

Patients detained in hospital in December 1994 under a hospital order with restrictions on discharge following a conviction for manslaughter in 1985–94 by hospital

	Number
Broadmoor	48
Rampton	48
Ashworth[1]	48
Arnold Lodge	3
Bexley	2
Bracton Clinic	1
Brookwood	1
Calderstones	1
Camlet Lodge	3
Caswell Clinic	4
Doncaster Gate	2
East Glamorgan	1
Edenfield Centre	1
Fieldhead	1
Friern	1
Glanryhd	1
Hackney	5
Kneesworth	3
Knowle	1
Marlborough House	2
Middlewood	1
Moorgreen	1
Napsbury	1
Newton Lodge	2
North Wales Hospital	1
Northgate	1
Northwick Park	1
Parkside	1
Pastures	1
Rainhill	1
Reaside	5
Runwell	1
Scott Clinic	2
St. Bernard's, Ealing	1
St. James'	1
St. Augustine's	1
Stockton Hall	1
Three Bridges	10
Trevor Gibbens Unit	1
Whittingham	1
Winterton	2
Total	214

[1] Moss Side and Park Lane merged to become Ashworth in February 1990.

Prison Staff (Suicides)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many prison staff committed suicide in each of the last 15 years. [26091]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 6 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about prison staff suicides in each of the last 15 years.

Staff suicides in the last five years were as follows:

1990: 4
1991: 2
1992: 5
1993: 4
1994: 11
1995: 2 (to date)

Records of the cause of staff deaths before 1990 are not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The increased number of staff suicides in 1994 is a matter of great concern to the Prison Service. The causes of each suicide have been carefully examined, but in no case does the cause appear to be related to work in the Prison Service.

Ebola Virus

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice has been issued to immigration officials dealing with persons entering the United Kingdom directly or indirectly, from Zaire, with particular reference to individuals who may have travelled through areas with Ebola virus cases. [26631]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information and advice about the Ebola virus issued by the Department of Health has been given to immigration officers who are instructed to refer to the port medical inspector any passenger seeking entry who appears to be unwell. The Immigration Service is closely monitoring the position as necessary with the Department of Health.

Royal Life Saving Society

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what financial support is currently being provided by his Department to the Royal Life Saving Society. [26748]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Royal Life Saving Society (UK) does not receive any financial support from my Department.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements he has with the Royal Life Saving Society relating to information required in responding to hon. Members questions concerning *(a)* coastal safety and *(b)* coastal lifeguard services. [26652]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: My Department has no standing arrangements for obtaining information from the Royal Life Saving Society (UK) on coastal water safety issues. But we would, of course, be ready to seek information from the society if we had reason to believe that it might be able to assist the preparation of a reply to a question from an hon. Member.

Mentally Ill Offenders

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, how many mentally ill people having come before a court with an offence punishable by imprisonment have been subject to a section 37 hospital order under the Mental Health Act 1983 for each year since 1989. [26644]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: This information, which is published annually in a Home Office Statistical Bulletin "Statistics of Mentally Disordered Offenders England and Wales", copies of which are in the Library, is given in the table. The figures for 1994 are not yet available.

Mentally disordered offenders made subject to section 37 Hospital Orders, England and Wales, 1989–1993

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Persons admitted to hospital under a hospital order (section 37) with a restriction order (section 41)	170	154	156	213	218

Mentally disordered offenders made subject to section 37 Hospital Orders, England and Wales, 1989–1993

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
Persons receiving a hospital order without a restriction order[1]	756	789	730	717	670
Total	926	943	886	930	888

[1] *Source:* sentencing statistics.

Licensed Premises

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to issue guidelines on the number of people that any licensed premises that does not have a public entertainment licence can safely allow on the premises. [26694]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The Home Department's "Guide to Fire Precautions in Existing Places of Entertainment and Like Premises", issued to fire authorities in 1990, included guidance on occupancy capacity for licensed premises. These guidelines are also applicable to premises which do not require a public entertainment licence. We have no plans to issue further guidance on this subject.

Electric Shock Weapons

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when a company was last granted authority specifically to possess electric shock weapons in or before 1991; if he will name the company; and for how long that permission was given. [26754]

Mr. Maclean: This information could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Police (Personal Data)

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to remove the United Kingdom derogations to principles 2.2 and 2.4 of the Council of Europe recommendation on the use of personal data in the police sector [R(87) (15)]; if he will list those member states who have not entered such a derogation; and if he will make a statement. [27008]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The UK has reserved its right to comply or not with principles 2.2 and 2.4 of the Council of Europe recommendation. There are no plans to lift these reservations.

No other Member state entered identical reservations when the recommendation was adopted, although the Republic of Ireland entered a general reservation to comply or not with the recommendation as a whole and Switzerland abstained.

Third Country Nationals

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates have been made of the increase in immigration to the United Kingdom and of the likely effect on public funds of permitting any third country national lawfully resident in one European Union country freely to enter and to remain in the United Kingdom. [27027]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None. The Government have no intention of allowing third country nationals lawfully resident in another member state to enter and remain freely in the United Kingdom.

Europol

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning progress towards agreement on the draft convention to establish Europol; and if he will make a statement on United Kingdom objections to the current version of the draft. [27006]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: In Essen on 9 and 10 December 1994 the European Council asked for work on the draft convention to be completed before its meeting in Cannes on 26 and 27 June this year. Good progress has been made under the French presidency. The Justice and Home Affairs Council will consider the outstanding issues on 20 and 21 June.

A copy of the current draft of the convention was sent to the appropriate parliamentary committees on 31 May under cover of an explanatory note. The United Kingdom is general content with the draft. We have reservations recorded against the text of articles 13 and 21 relating respectively to:

(i) a Belgian proposal to amend the text so as to use the Europol Convention as a vehicle for extending to paper files, for the first time, particular data protection measures previously agreed only in respect of automatic data processing. This is not a reservation against the convention text itself;

(ii) drafting aspects of the test relating to the role of national data protection authorities and the joint supervisory body.

A number of outstanding articles in the current text are blank—these relate to data protection and institutional questions. Intensive negotiations are underway to reach agreement between member states on these issues.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement concerning the status of the Council of Europe recommendation on the use of personal data in the police sector [R(87) (15)] with respect to the draft convention to establish Europol. [27002]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Article 13 of the draft convention requires member states and Europol to take account of the Council of Europe recommendation.

Drugs, Holloway

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what percentage of mandatory drug tests have thus far been positive in HM prison Holloway; and what were the main drugs detected. [26889]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 6 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question concerning the results from the drug testing programme at Holloway prison.

Holloway has only recently started their drug testing programme. The first results from the prison are not yet available.

Schengen Agreement

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what studies have been made of the likely consequences for the United Kingdom of its accession to the Schengen agreement. [27029]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None. The United Kingdom is not a party to the Schengen agreement and has no intention of applying for membership, which would be inconsistent with the maintenance of our system of frontier controls.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimates have been made of any changes in the net migration flows between those European Union countries which have implemented the Schengen agreement. [27028]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The United Kingdom has made no such estimates.

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures have been taken to strengthen the European Union's external frontiers following the implementation of the Schengen agreement by seven member states. [27026]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The Schengen agreement is not an agreement of the European Union and its provisions relate only to the external frontiers of the Schengen area, not to those of the Union.

Female Prisoners

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the female prison population at HM prison, Holloway and HMP Styal on 31 December 1993, 30 June 1994, 31 January 1995 and for the latest date for which figures are available. [26893]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 6 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the female prison population at Holloway and Styal prisons on 31 December 1993, 30 June 1994, 31 January 1995 and for the latest date for which figures are available.

The information requested is given in the table below:

Female population at HMP Holloway and HMP Styal on 31 December 1993, 30 June 1994, 31 January 1995 and 26 May 1995

Date	Prison Service establishment	
	HMP Holloway	HMP Styal
31 December 1993	448	201
30 June 1994	483	226
31 January 1995	530	244
26 May 1995	518	239

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many sentenced female prisoners in England and Wales were granted parole on *(a)* their first application and *(b)* their second application; and what percentage this represented of all applications in each of the last three years. [26892]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A.J. Butler to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 6 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many sentenced female prisoners in England and Wales were granted parole on (a) their first application and (b) their second application; and what percentage this represented of all applications in each of the last three years.

New early release arrangements were introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 1991 which were implemented on 1 October 1992 and which apply to those sentenced on or after 1 October 1992. Prisoners now sentenced to less than four years are released automatically at the mid point of their sentences. This has led to a progressive reduction in the parole caseload from 1993 onwards.

The information requested is given in the attached table.

Determinate sentence cases considered and those recommended for parole at first or second reviews 1992–94

Females, England and Wales	Number of reviews/percentage		
	1992	1993	1994
Total considered	713	284	73
Recommended at first review	396	142	20
Recommended at second review	86	46	14
Percentage of total considered recommended at first or second review	67.6	66.2	46.6

Nigerian Nationals

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Nigerian nationals convicted of a drug offence in England and Wales and subsequently deported have been re-arrested on their arrival in Nigeria since 1 January 1994. [26688]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None that we are aware of.

Holloway and Styal Prisons

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the catchment area for sentenced and remand prisoners in *(a)* HM Prison Holloway and *(b)* HMP Styal. [26890]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 6 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the catchment areas for sentenced and remand prisoners in Holloway prison and Styal prison.

Holloway prison holds female prisoners committed by the courts from the following areas:

Greater London (including City of London)
Bedfordshire
Berkshire
Buckinghamshire
Cambridgeshire
Essex
Hampshire
Hertfordshire
Isle of Wight
Kent
Norfolk
Northamptonshire
Oxfordshire
Suffolk
Surrey
East and West Sussex

Styal prison is a training establishment and accommodates sentenced female prisoners allocated from local prisons under the criteria and procedures set out in Circular Instruction 2/1991, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House. As a contingency

arrangement, it can take a limited number of unsentenced female prisoners from Risley, if this becomes necessary, because of population pressures in the region. Risley serves the courts in the North West of England, North and Mid Wales, Staffordshire and Shropshire.

Identity Cards

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will seek the opinions of the Governments of *(a)* the USA, *(b)* Canada, *(c)* Australia, *(d)* New Zealand, *(e)* Denmark and *(f)* Norway on the reasons they do not have compulsory ID cards. [27346]

Nr. Nicholas Baker: The Green Paper on identity cards published on 24 May 1995, Cm 2879, sets out information on the use of identity cards and other methods of identification in a number of different countries including those specified. We have no plans at present to seek further information on international experience.

Probation Officers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library the representations he has received from representatives of professional bodies concerning his proposals to change the nature of the qualifications and training of probation officers. [27318]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We have received a large number of responses to the consultative proposals concerning probation officers' recruitment and qualifying training published earlier this year. It would not be appropriate for me to place copies of individual submissions in the Library, although when announcing the conclusions we expect to give an account of the nature and balance of the overall response. It is of course open to the hon. Member to approach directly those professional bodies in whose responses he has an interest, to establish whether they would be willing to make them available to him.

African National Congress (Bombing)

Mr. Hain: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *289*, if the police have interviewed former British Telecom security officer, Mr. George Alton, in connection with the bombing of the London offices of the African National Congress in 1982. [27306]

Mr. Howard: The detailed conduct of a criminal investigation is a matter for the chief officer of police concerned. If anyone has information which might be relevant to this investigation it should be passed to the Metropolitan police.

Boundary Commission Report

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take in respect of the fourth periodical report of the Boundary Commission for England. [27374]

Mr. Howard: I have today laid before Parliament the fourth periodical report of the Boundary Commission for England together with a draft Order in Council for giving effect, without modifications, to the recommendations contained in the report.

Volunteering Report

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the report of the "Make A Difference" team on volunteering in the United Kingdom will be published, and if he will make a statement. [27375]

Mr. Howard: The report prepared by the "Make a Difference" team— "Make A Difference: An Outline Volunteering Strategy for the UK" was published today. Copies have been placed in the Library. I attended the launch of the report this morning. I am very grateful to the members of the "Make A Difference" team for their hard work and commitment in producing such a thorough report, with a wide range of recommendations.

Together with the report's publication, I announced the Government's response to the key recommendations it contained.

I have today set out an action plan:

we will fund the creation of local volunteer development agencies in those parts of the country where no equivalent bodies exist now; our intention is to ensure country-wide coverage before the end of the century;

the establishment of a new national body in England, the Volunteering Partnership; its key tasks will be to advise me on promoting volunteering especially by young and older people, to stimulate the development of the local agencies and to ensure the development of opportunities for young people;

we are putting in place youth challenge, a scheme to ensure that by the end of 1997 there will be volunteering opportunities for all 15 to 25-year-olds who wish to volunteer;

individual applications have been invited for grants of up to £30,000 for 50 imaginative projects to promote volunteering by young and older people;

a new UK-wide "Make A Difference" award to recognise outstanding contributions by volunteering organisations;

a publicity campaign to promote volunteering.

Volunteers make a contribution of immeasurable value to this country. People who give up their time to help others greatly enrich their communities. Many millions already volunteer in this country, and many organisations support them. But there remains great untapped potential in those who could volunteer but choose not to. Our announcement today, which stresses "Every Hour Makes A Difference", will directly help to realise that potential.

Police Discipline

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will make it his policy to permit disciplinary procedures to be pursued against a police officer even if that officer is unable to attend the hearing due to sickness; [26294]

(2) if he will change police discipline regulations and the regulations governing sickness so that the latter may not prevent proceeding with the former. [26295]

Mr. Maclean: The present provisions governing police discipline do not prevent discipline procedures from being pursued in respect of an officer who is sick and allow a disciplinary hearing to take place, if necessary, in the absence of a sick officer, subject to certain safeguards.

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if he will list the names of the private consultants who have certified the inability of an officer of the West Midlands police to attend disciplinary hearings; [26293]

(2) how many officers from the West Midlands police force who have retired on sick pension in the last two years did so when they were subject to disciplinary investigation or charges; [26296]

(3) how many police officers have retired on sick pension from the West Midlands police force in the last two years. [26297]

Mr. Maclean: Under the terms of the Police Pensions Regulations 1987, medical retirement provisions are administered locally by police authorities. A record is not kept centrally of a police officer's medical consultants nor of the number and circumstances of ill-health retirements.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to stop police facing disciplinary charges from retiring early on medical grounds in order to avoid the completion of disciplinary proceedings. [25741]

Mr. Maclean: A police officer may retire from the service on grounds of disablement only if he or she is required by the police authority concerned to do so. This applies whether or not the officer faces disciplinary charges.

Casinos

Mr. Atkinson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to end the 48-hour rule on admission to casinos, to allow casinos limited advertising, to allow casinos to accept cheques and credit cards and to establish the right of appeal against decisions of the Gaming Board; and if he will make a statement. [26585]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: As part of the Government's deregulation initiative we have been reviewing the controls on gambling, including casino gaming. We hope to issue a consultation paper soon.

Custody Deaths

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people aged 25 years and under have died *(a)* in prison and *(b)* in police custody in England in (i) 1993, (ii) 1994 and (iii) so far this year. [26374]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is provided in the table:

Year	*Prison Custody*	*Police Custody*
1993	23	12
1994	32	10
1995 to date	9	3

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people aged 25 years and under have died *(a)* in prison and *(b)* in police custody in Wales in (i) 1993, (ii) 1994 and (iii) so far this year. [26375]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The information requested is provided in the table:

Year	*Prison Custody*	*Prison Custody*
1993	0	0
1994	3	0
1995 to date	0	0

Remand Prisoners

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many male prisoners were received on remand during 1993 and 1994; and how many were eventually *(a)* given a custodial sentence, *(b)* given a non-custodial sentence and *(c)* acquitted or not proceeded with. [26196]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated May 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many male prisoners were received on remand during 1993 and 1994, and how many were eventually (a) given a custodial sentence, (b) given a non-custodial sentence and (c) acquitted or not proceeded with.

Information on the number of males received on remand into a Prison Service establishment in England and Wales in 1993 and 1994 is shown in table 1. Information on the court outcome is available for 1993 from court remand statistics and is given in table 2.

Table 1: Receptions[1] into Prison Service establishments of untried and convicted unsentenced male prisoners in 1993 and 1994

Males	*[2]1993*	*[2]1994*
Untried prisoners	50,918	53,796
Convicted unsentenced prisoners	28,593	30,919
All remand prisoners	59,914	64,189

[1] "All remand prisoners" describes those prisoners received firstly as an untried prisoner then subsequently as a convicted unsentenced prisoner. They are included only once in the figure.
[2] Provisional figures.

Table 2: Final court outcome for males remanded in custody at some stage in magistrates' court proceedings[1] in 1993

England and Wales	*Estimated percentages Males*
Final court outcome[2]	
Acquitted not proceeded with etc	22
Non-custodial sentence:	36
Community sentence[3]	20
Fine	7
Absolute or conditional discharge	6
Other non-custodial sentence	3
Custodial sentence	42
Total	100

[1] Includes persons remanded in custody by magistrates during proceedings or on committal.
[2] Includes estimated outcome at the Crown Court for those committed for trial or sentence.
[3] Includes CSO, probation, supervision orders, attendance centre orders.

Smoke Alarms

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to allow metropolitan fire authorities to distribute and install smoke alarms free of charge. [26312]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Fire authorities are not required to obtain the permission of my right hon. and learned Friend to distribute and install smoke alarms free of charge. But it has recently been suggested that there may

be a legal impediment to this practice. The Department is currently looking into this.

Aids

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which prisons currently operate viral infectivity restrictions for prisoners with HIV/AIDS; and what proportion this represents of the total number of prison establishments within England and Wales. [26412]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Harry Cohen, dated 6 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the operation of viral infectivity restrictions for prisoners with HIV and or AIDS.

Of those prisons which currently hold inmates known to have HIV infection, none operates viral infectivity restrictions.

When the last survey was carried out in December 1993 7 prisons said that they would apply VIR to HIV positive prisoners. However at that time, as at present, none of these prisons hold inmates with HIV infection.

Video Evidence

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has to implement the principal recommendations of the Pigot committee on the taking of evidence from very young children; and what review he has undertaken of the present working of the law in this area. [26205]

Mr. Maclean: The Criminal Justice Act 1991 implemented most of the recommendations made by the advisory group on video evidence. The only significant recommendation which has not been implemented concerns the pre-trial cross-examination of child witnesses. This remains under consideration. We are not yet persuaded that such a system would be in the best interests of the child.

We commissioned a major research study by Professor Graham Davies of Leicester university into the effectiveness of the child evidence provisions of the Criminal Justice Act 1991. The report of this study entitled "Videotaping children's evidence: an evaluation", was published on 18 May. I am sending a copy to the hon. Gentleman.

Special Constables

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures he has taken to enable more special constables to be recruited in north Wales; and if he will make a statement. [25673]

Mr. Maclean: The recruitment of special constables in north Wales is a matter for the chief constable. But north Wales is benefiting from the national advertising campaign launched last October. I refer the hon. Member to my reply of 24 November at column *288*.

Departmental Staff

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many staff of *(a)* the Home Office and *(b)* agencies for which the Home Office is responsible (i) took early retirement, (ii) took voluntary redundancy, (iii) took compulsory redundancy and (iv) were retired on medical grounds in (1) 1993–94 and (2) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25509]

Mr. Howard: The information is set out in the table. All agencies are part of the Home Office.

Area	*Time*	*(i) Early retirement*[2]	*(ii) Voluntary redundancy*	*(iii) Compulsory redundancy*	*(iv) Medical grounds*
Home Office (main)	1993–94	22	1	52	32
	1994–95	28	1	10	56
	[1]1995–96	4	0	3	3
Prison Service	1993–94	16	3	2	381
	1994–95	8	2	4	271
	[1]1995–96	1	0	0	5
United Kingdom Passport Agency	1993–94	0	0	0	11
	1994–95	2	0	0	7
	[1]1995–96	0	0	0	3
Forensic Science Service	1993–94	1	0	0	0
	1994–95	6	0	0	6
	[1]1995–96	0	0	0	0
Fire Service College	1993–94	0	2	0	9
	1994–95	0	0	0	1
	[1]1995–96	1	0	0	0

[1] To 23 May 1995.
[2] Excludes redundancy and retirement on medical grounds.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the annual cost to the Department of staff leaving under redundancy—early retirement schemes to incorporate (i) added years lump sum payments, (ii) redundancy payments, (iii) pension payments including enhancements (iv) any other special arrangements for *(a)* 1993–94, *(b)* 1994–95 and projected for *(c)* 1995–96 and *(d)* 1996–97. [25641]

Mr. Howard: The costs to the department of early retirement and redundancies are borne from the Department's running costs provision.

A detailed breakdown of the various costs could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The total costs borne on the Department's running costs, in respect of early retirements and redundancies, in 1993–94 and 1994–95 were £3,191,837 and £2,573,353.

Projected costs for 1995–96 are not yet available, and projections for 1996–97 will be determined during the coming public expenditure survey.

Police Research Group

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has made of the report of the Home Office police research group on policing and neighbourhood watch; and if he will make a statement. [25210]

Mr. Maclean: I welcome the publication of the police research group report on policing and neighbourhood watch and its proposals for extending neighbourhood watch as part of the overall strategy for developing effective and efficient use of police resources. The report has been discussed with the Association of Chief Police Officers' sub-committee on crime prevention and Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary. The report and its implications will now be given careful consideration.

Police (Protective Clothing)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when every police officer in London will be provided with a bullet-proof or knife-proof vest; [25069]

(2) how many bullet-proof vests have been issued in London to police officers. [25068]

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that, at present, approximately 5,500 protective vests are available for use by officers in the Metropolitan police district. The Commissioner is considering various options relating to the issue of protective clothing to all police officers and expects to make proposals to us shortly.

Stolen Vehicles

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the recovery rate for stolen vehicles in 1994 *(a)* in total and *(b)* by constabulary. [26178]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* Revised figures for 1994 are given in the table. They up-date the figures given in the reply to the hon. Member on 1 May at columns 96-98. These figures remain provisional and finalised data will be published in the command paper, "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, 1994", later this year.

Notifiable offences of theft of a vehicle recorded by the police, 1994 percentage of vehicles recovered by police forces area[1]

Police Force area	*Percentage recovered*
Avon and Somerset	19
Bedfordshire	62
Cambridgeshire	43
Cheshire	53
Cleveland	55
Cumbria	67
Derbyshire	62
Devon and Cornwall	85
Dorset	63
Durham	49
Essex	73
Gloucestershire	67
Greater Manchester	64
Hampshire	51

Notifiable offences of theft of a vehicle recorded by the police, 1994 percentage of vehicles recovered by police forces area[1]

Police Force area	*Percentage recovered*
Hertfordshire	68
Humberside	85
Kent	53
Lancashire	81
Leicestershire	72
Lincolnshire	82
City of London	86
Merseyside	73
Metropolitan Police	—
Norfolk	50
Northamptonshire	53
Northumbria	71
North Yorkshire	60
Nottinghamshire	61
South Yorkshire	57
Staffordshire	57
Suffolk	66
Surrey	47
Sussex	50
Thames Valley	62
Warwickshire	73
West Mercia	75
West Midlands	70
West Yorkshire	60
Wiltshire	46
Dyfed-Powys	—
Gwent	61
North Wales	75
South Wales	65
England and Wales	62[2]

[1] Provisional

[2] Excluding the Metropolitan Police and Dyfed-Powys.

Immigration Detainees

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons are currently detained under Immigration Act powers in *(a)* Immigration Service detention centres and *(b)* Prison Service establishments. [26290]

Mr. Nicholas Baker *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* The latest available data is given in the table.

		Persons in detention under Immigration Act powers[1]	
Category of person	*Date to which data relate*	*Immigration Service detention centres*	*Prison Service establishments*
Port asylum applicants[2]	10 May 1995	228	50
Other port cases[3] and persons subject to enforcement action	23 May 1995	153	204
		381	254

[1] Excluding persons held in police cells.

[2] Figures exclude 45 persons for whom the place of detention is not recorded in the statistics.

[3] Excluding passengers refused leave to enter at the ports who have been in detention for less than a month; these statistics are not held centrally.

Irish Terrorist Prisoners

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners convicted of IRA offences held in prisons on the mainland; and how many have been approved for transfer to prisons in Ireland and Northern Ireland. [25402]

Mr. Howard *[holding answer 22 May 1995]:* A total of 35 prisoners convicted of Irish terrorist offences are currently held in prisons in England and Wales. The transfer of one prisoner to Northern Ireland has been approved subject to the outcome of further criminal proceedings. No prisoners have been approved for transfer to the Republic of Ireland.

Wheelclamping

Mr. Corbett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will place in the Library a copy of the assessment by the Association of Chief Police Officers of *(a)* the extent of problems associated with wheelclamping on private land and *(b)* the practicality of proposals to overcome these. [25867]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 24 May 1995]:* The assessment was made by the Association of Chief Police Officers as part of the process of developing and considering possible policy options and it would not therefore be appropriate to publish it. I can, however, say that it indicated that the problems arising from the activities of unscrupulous operators are confined to a few force areas and that there is not considered to be a significant problem in other forces.

Notifiable Offences

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes were recorded in each borough by the Metropolitan police within each category of crime in 1994; how may incidents of theft or unauthorised taking of a motor vehicle and of theft from a motor vehicle were recorded in each borough; and how many of the burglaries recorded in each borough were *(a)* in a dwelling and *(b)* in another building. [23877]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 18 May 1995]:* The information requested has been supplied by the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis and is contained in the following table:

Notifiable offences recorded by the Local Authority Borough or District
Metropolitan Police District 1994

Number of offences

Borough/District	Total	Violence against the person	Sexual offences	Robbery	Burglary and going equipped	Theft and handling stolen goods	Fraud and forgery	Criminal damage	Other offences	Theft of vehicle	Theft from vehicle	Burglary in a dwelling	Burglary in another building
Barking	14,938	677	124	202	3,558	6,471	513	3,288	105	1,045	2,095	1,962	1,591
Barnet	24,524	778	169	389	5,046	11,326	868	5,794	154	1,085	4,885	3,912	1,898
Bexley	17,831	794	181	173	3,502	8,266	518	4,296	101	1,105	2,740	2,208	1,205
Brent	26,149	1,527	209	1,875	4,985	10,778	987	5,590	198	805	3,307	3,119	1,245
Bromley	27,893	1,297	180	264	5,593	13,080	791	6,518	170	1,131	4,765	3,752	1,765
Camden	35,746	1,491	158	1,176	6,313	19,612	1,267	5,443	286	1,163	5,597	3,633	2,635
Croydon	32,520	2,187	286	632	6,116	14,829	1,232	7,009	229	1,217	4,859	4,038	2,066
Ealing	28,127	1,434	222	749	4,566	12,943	1,232	6,806	175	1,367	4,123	3,196	1,366
Enfield	20,996	1,380	160	373	4,039	9,404	805	4,712	123	876	4,165	2,795	1,828
Greenwich	32,519	1,902	408	471	7,021	13,784	872	7,774	287	1,461	4,457	4,944	2,046
Hackney	29,263	1,529	265	2,251	7,364	11,708	1,075	4,750	321	498	1,721	2,816	984
Hammersmith	23,332	1,201	142	823	4,249	11,877	641	4,239	160	897	4,967	2,882	1,353
Haringey	22,313	1,363	197	1,184	4,393	9,888	779	4,325	184	1,259	2,972	3,161	1,183
Harrow	14,591	653	101	255	3,140	6,164	578	3,633	67	378	2,216	2,154	966
Havering	17,637	532	299	110	3,652	8,802	623	3,557	62	1,658	2,461	2,039	1,581
Hillingdon	23,316	1,190	133	183	4,169	10,791	674	6,074	102	988	4,127	2,413	1,489
Hounslow	27,476	1,854	306	423	5,371	10,882	1,125	6,976	539	816	3,296	2,467	1,482
Islington	27,682	1,895	191	1,098	4,913	13,125	758	5,339	363	984	4,002	2,778	1,588
Kensington and Chelsea	27,706	1,072	153	956	4,408	16,346	959	3,570	242	702	3,058	2,931	630
Kingston	19,499	1,158	109	251	4,438	8,258	621	4,322	342	325	2,542	1,933	1,541
Lambeth	30,416	2,223	292	2,236	5,866	12,605	898	5,940	358	978	3,160	5,459	1,503
Lewisham	30,532	2,076	297	1,096	7,474	12,702	887	5,607	393	1,527	3,995	5,395	2,080
Merton	18,474	967	135	451	3,466	8,309	903	4,106	137	676	2,319	1,700	1,013
Newham	30,157	1,748	617	1,040	6,606	13,189	1,042	5,695	220	1,718	3,752	3,303	2,329
Redbridge	20,294	1,002	140	266	3,811	10,112	1,002	3,817	144	1,183	1,566	1,539	727
Richmond	15,292	903	124	260	3,693	6,364	436	3,301	211	323	1,873	1,604	981
Southwark	40,836	2,840	353	2,292	7,734	18,008	1,312	7,810	487	1,953	6,117	5,040	2,710
Sutton	13,881	819	126	112	3,429	6,071	436	2,800	88	606	1,706	2,166	1,220
Tower Hamlets	25,084	1,345	192	532	4,938	12,009	700	5,118	250	1,090	3,705	1,708	2,405
Wandsworth	36,889	2,234	323	1,353	6,905	15,480	1,457	8,152	986	1,238	5,024	3,137	1,510
Waltham Forest	20,309	1,119	106	649	3,815	9,749	745	4,025	101	1,279	2,654	2,353	1,433
Westminster	56,796	2,020	252	2,051	6,950	36,560	2,837	5,642	484	636	4,629	2,611	3,443
Broxbourne (part)	3,413	265	8	23	448	1,756	102	800	11	90	849	345	303
Elmbridge (part)	2,269	167	25	177	141	1,138	81	514	26	0	17	7	7
Epping Forest (part)	4,306	305	21	24	605	2,206	150	959	36	304	701	364	229
Epsom and Ewell	5,937	293	41	41	1,432	2,432	198	1,459	41	154	771	746	418
Hertsmere	5,219	161	30	43	732	2,634	179	1,419	21	161	1,060	369	335
Reigate and Banstead (part)	2,607	144	9	5	519	1,106	116	689	19	71	459	334	177
Spelthorne	8,817	596	65	53	1,971	3,631	257	2,110	134	187	1,460	514	784
Welwyn Hatfield (part)	35	3	1	0	6	27	7	7	4	1	10	7	4
Heathrow Airport	4,640	66	7	69	53	3,473	415	325	232	50	375	4	20
Thames	93	0	0	0	1	61	0	31	0	0	0	0	1
Central Cheque Squad	1,376	0	0	0	0	68	1,226	80	2	0	0	0	0
MPD total	871,752	47,210	7,157	26,611	167,431	408,024	32,304	174,421	8,594	33,985	118,557	97,828	54,074

Detainees

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report* column *364*, how the overall weekly cost of detaining a person under Immigration Act powers in accommodation for which the Immigration Service is responsible is calculated. [26271]

Mr. Nicholas Baker *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* The overall cost of detention in the Immigration Service estate is calculated by adding together the costs for custodial and escorting services, running costs, accommodation charges, staff costs and capital costs. This is then divided by the average daily number of detainees to give a unit cost per detainee day, from which the weekly figure is calculated.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *364*, how the average cost of detaining a person under Immigration Act powers, in accommodation for which the Immigration Service is responsible, has been reduced between 1993–94 and the current cost. [26272]

Mr. Nicholas Baker *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* The reduction in costs is largely due to a reduction in the use of expensive ad hoc accommodation. This is a consequence of an increase in the number of places available within the Immigration Service detention estate.

Arrests

Mr. Bendall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many operations have been mounted to enforce section 167 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994; how many arrests have been made; how many prosecutions have been initiated; how many convictions obtained; and what sentences were given in consequence. [26183]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* Information on the number of operations mounted and arrests made is not collected centrally. Information on court proceedings under section 167 of the Act will not be available until autumn 1996.

"Tomorrow's Job"

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police forces have co-operated with the Metropolitan police in the "Tomorrow's Job" investigation; when the investigation started; what was the main focus of the investigation; how many people have been interviewed; how many premises have been visited; if he will list the charges which have been laid indicating, in each case, the outcome; and if he will make a statement. [25985]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that all forces who received copies of the publication "Tomorrow's Job" have co-operated fully with the Metropolitan police in the inquiry, which started immediately after distribution of the publication in early March of this year. The main focus of the investigation is to establish who published the paper; what was the purpose of publication; and who was involved in its distribution. The investigation is still in progress and to date two arrests have been made. It would not be right for me to give further details at this stage.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science Budget

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement on the work of the scientific document centre based in Dunfermline in developing the European resource of serials projects with particular reference to the preparation of Union list databases; and what is his Department's policy in respect of provision of public funds to rival companies in this area. [27307]

Mr. Horam: My Department's science budget is used to provide grant-in-aid to the research councils, the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering and for a programme on the public understanding of science. It does not fund any work in this area.

Government Policy

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many hours per week he spends co-ordinating the presentation of Government policy. [26015]

Mr. David Hunt: I spend as much time as necessary on all my responsibilities.

Citizens Charter

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to publish new citizens charters; and if he will list the areas to be covered. [26571]

Mr. Horam: We are hoping to publish new charters for further and higher education in Northern Ireland in the autumn. We also have a programme for publishing revised charters. A revised contributors charter for national insurance payers was published in April and we will be shortly following this up with revised charters for council tenants, court users and people travelling through Customs points.

Duchy Affairs

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many hours per week he spends on Duchy affairs. [26726]

Mr. David Hunt: I spend as much time as necessary on all my responsibilities.

Archway Tower

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what discussions he has had with the Property Services Agency on the future use by Government Departments of the Archway tower, Junction road, London N19; and if he will make a statement. [26978]

Mr. Horam: The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has not had any discussions about the future use of Archway tower.

Information Superhighways

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when will CCTA report on their work on information superhighways in general and the Internet in particular. [24875]

Mr. Horam: In accordance with the undertaking given by the then Parliamentary Secretary, Office of Public Service and Science, on 24 January, *Official Report*, columns *116-17*, I have placed in the Library of the House copies of the first report on CCTA's work on information superhighways. This includes progress and future plans for the Government world wide web server "www.open.gov.uk". The report will also be available over the Internet via the CCTA Government information service.

Civil Service Posts

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will list the number of civil service posts, including positions in executive agencies but excluding technical appointments at grades 1 to 6 which have been advertised, together with the number of applicants, interviewees and appointees broken down to show *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* non-civil servants for each year from 1 January 1990 to 31 December as a whole in England. [26945]

Mr. Horam: Full information is not available in the form requested. The Office of the Civil Service Commissioners has been able to provide the following figures for all open competition appointments at grades 1 to 5 approved by the commissioners for the period 1 July 1993 to 30 June 1994. Further analysis could be undertken only at disproportionate cost.

Grade	*Number of posts*	*Applicants of which ( ): civil servants*	*Interviewed of which ( ): civil servants*	*Appointees of which ( ): civil servants*
1	1	37 (3)	5 (0)	1 (0)
2	7	435 (36)	30 (3)	7 (1)
3	9	731 (80)	42 (15)	9 (4)
4	17	801 (94)	75 (32)	16 (9)
5	25	2,332 (175)	169 (21)	24 (3)
Total	59	4,336 (388)	321 (71)	57 (17)

Further details on senior appointments approved by the Civil Service Commissioners following open competition are provided in the Civil Service Commissioners' annual reports, copies of which are placed in the Library of the House.

DEFENCE

Northern Ireland

15. **Mr. Mike O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what proposals he has for redeployment of the Army from Northern Ireland should circumstances and the peace process permit it. [25108]

Mr. Soames: Our deployment of the Army in Northern Ireland depends on the security situation in the Province.

Bosnia

16. **Mr. Jon Owen Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with his NATO counterparts concerning the future withdrawal of the UN from Bosnia. [25109]

Mr. Soames: My right hon. and learned Friend has regular discussions with NATO colleagues on a range of issues concerning Bosnia, including contingency planning for an operation to withdraw UN forces, should that become necessary.

20. **Mr. Lewis:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many troops would be required to facilitate a UN withdrawal from Bosnia. [25113]

Mr. Soames: At the request of the UN Secretary General, NATO is continuing with contingency planning for an operation to withdraw UN forces from Bosnia, should that become necessary. It would not be appropriate for me to comment on the details of the plan, which are a matter for NATO.

17. **Mr. Wicks:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will report on the latest situation regarding the shelling of Sarajevo. [25110]

24. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a further statement about the deployment of British forces in Bosnia. [25117]

Mr. Soames: We deplore the continued fighting between Bosnian Government and Bosnian Serb forces in and around Sarajevo. We condemn in the strongest terms the indiscriminate attacks on civilians and the deliberate targeting of UNPROFOR troops in the city, and call on the parties to refrain from further military action.

Attack Helicopters

18. **Mr. Mark Robinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to strengthen Britain's front line attack helicopter capability. [25111]

Mr. Freeman: My Department is currently assessing bids for an attack helicopter for the Army, to replace Lynx in the anti-armour role.

We expect to announce a decision on the choice of attack helicopter this summer.

Mr. Clelland: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he expects to announce the successful bidder to supply attack helicopters to the British Army. [26304]

Mr. Freeman: We hope to announce a decision on the purchase of attack helicopter before the summer recess.

Equipment Purchases

19. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of defence equipment purchases is manufactured in the United Kingdom. [25112]

Mr. Freeman: Figure 13 in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1995"—CM 2800—shows that, over the past five years, my Department has spent some 79 per cent. of its equipment budget with United Kingdom industry, 12 per cent. on collaborative projects but placed in the UK and 9 per cent. with overseas companies. However, equipment bought from UK prime contractors is likely to include some components which have been manufactured overseas; similarly, equipment bought from overseas contractors may contain components which originated in the UK. The sourcing of components is a matter for the prime contractor, and so my Department is unable to estimate the percentage of equipment purchases which is manufactured in the UK.

Nuclear Weapons

21. **Ms Glenda Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action his Department has taken to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. [25114]

Mr. Soames: My Department supports a wide range of measures including work leading to the successful indefinite extension of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty; playing a positive and constructive part in negotiations on a comprehensive test ban treaty; supporting international efforts for a convention banning production of fissile material for military explosive purposes; scrutinising export licence applications for nuclear-related goods; and contributing to the work of international organisations such as the Zangger committee and nuclear suppliers group.

RAF Burtonwood

22. **Mr. Hall:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy on the sale of the RAF Burtonwood air base. [25115]

Mr. Soames: The RAF Burtonwood site has been declared surplus to defence requirements. Officials are in consultation with interested parties on the future of the site in order to prepare sale particulars in due course.

Meteorological Office

23. **Mr. French:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the performance of the Meteorological Office. [25116]

Mr. Freeman: The Meterological Office's annual report and accounts for 1993–94 includes an assessment of performance against key business plan targets, on pages 11 and 12. Copies of the report are available in the Library of the House.

Defence Industry

25. **Mr. Thurnham:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations she has received about future prospects for the British defence industry. [25118]

Mr. Freeman: Ministers and officials of my Department regularly receive many and varied representations about future prospects for the defence industry, from hon. Members, representatives of industry and others.

Parachute Contracts

26. **Mr. Heald:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the awarding of parachute maintenance and supply contracts for the British Army. [25119]

Mr. Freeman: Contracts for the maintenance and supply of parachutes for the British Army are awarded, where practicable, through competition.

Bovington and Lulworth

27. **Mr. Ian Bruce:** To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future use of his Department's facilities at Bovington and Lulworth in Dorset. [25120]

Mr. Soames: At present, my Department's facilities at Bovington are occupied by the Royal Armoured Corps centre training regiment and the Army base repair organisation Bovington. The Gunnery school at Lulworth is part of the RAC centre and comprises an RAC wing and infantry wing. A detachment of ABRO is also located at Lulworth. These activities will continue at Bovington and Lulworth in the future. It is our intention further to develop Bovington as the centre of all armoured fighting vehicle driving, gunnery and signals training; and to move naval gunfire support training from Lulworth to Dodman point in Cornwall from this autumn. Bovington and

Lulworth are also being considered as a possible location, alongside the RAC training centre, for the third armoured reconnaissance regiment.

Trident

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the presumed targets for missiles on the Trident fleet in the light of the outcome of the non-proliferation treaty. [25093]

Mr. Rifkind: Our strategic missiles have not been routinely targeted since 30 May 1994.

Hurricane Nuclear Weapons Test

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what continued monitoring is conducted by his Department on the equipment, materials and other technology which was brought back to the United Kingdom from ships returning from the Hurricane nuclear weapons test; and if his Department retains records of the present location of radioactively contaminated materials arising from this test. [26702]

Mr. Soames: No records have been kept of the fate of contaminated equipment and other items brought back from the Hurricane nuclear weapons test.

Fissile Materials

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the total quantities of *(a)* plutonium and *(b)* highly enriched uranium, in the dedicated defence stockpile. [25294]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 14 June 1994, *Official Report*, column *536*, to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen).

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what happens to the fissile material in pre-existing nuclear weapons that are de-commissioned; to what extent it is available for use in new weapons; and if he will make a statement. [26912]

Mr. Freeman: Fissile material from redundant nuclear weapons is reprocessed for use in new weapons.

Construction Projects

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will provide a list of all construction projects proposed, planned or at present underway at Atomic Weapons Establishment Aldermaston and Burghfield following the Health and Safety Executive's recommendations and Hunting BRAE's review of the infrastructure at the atomic weapons establishments; and if he will make a statement. [26347]

Mr. Freeman: The Health and Safety Executive review was primarily directed at safety management arrangements rather than construction schemes. Five such schemes were recommended, however, related to waste management. They were the design and procurement of a mobile real time radiography unit for waste assay purposes; the conversion of an existing building to provide a drum inspection facility for intermediate level waste; the construction of a radioactive waste size reduction facility; the construction of a further intermediate level waste store with modern drum stacking densities; and improvements to the facilities at Aldermaston and Burghfield for handling toxic waste. These schemes are now in progress in accordance with the timescales that the Health and Safety Executive and the establishments have agreed with my Department.

In addition, the Hunting-BRAE review identified a large number of relatively minor alterations and improvements to facilities, some of which are directed at meeting evolving safety standards.

Weapons Establishment

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what progress has been made in implementing each of the recommendations made by the Health and Safety Executive to improve health and safety at the Atomic Weapons Establishment. [26351]

Mr. Freeman: All but one of the Health and Safety Executive's recommendations in its report of October 1994 were for implementation by the Atomic Weapons Establishment. Agreed acceptance criteria for completion of the work have been established with the HSE, and from time to time AWE report progress both to my Department and to the executive. One recommendation was for my Department, and concerned licensing of the AWE sites at Aldermaston and Burghfield under the Nuclear Installations Act 1965. As I announced on 23 March, *Official Report*, column *215*, we are moving towards achievement of this during 1997.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for public consultation exercises on whether or not the Atomic Weapons Establishment should be granted a nuclear site licence. [26345]

Mr. Freeman: Before deciding upon the appropriateness of issuing a nuclear site licence, the Health and Safety Executive will follow its normal consultation procedures. As well as consulting relevant regulatory authorities it is open to the executive, in accordance with the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, to consult local authorities and other relevant public bodies.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the reasons for the delay in placing full details of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution's authorisations for radioactive discharges from the Atomic Weapons Establishment on the public register. [26348]

Mr. Freeman: Authorisations in respect of Atomic Weapons Establishment sites cannot be placed on the public register because they contain classified information. What information can be disclosed is published annually by AWE in its reports on discharges and environmental monitoring and health and safety.

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the Radioactive Waste Management advisory committee's investigation at the Atomic Weapons Establishments will start. [26346]

Mr. Freeman: The Radioactive Waste Management advisory committee has conducted a review of radioactive waste management practices within the Ministry of Defence. As part of this review the chairman and other members visited the Atomic Weapons Establishments at Aldermaston and Burghfield on 17 and 18 January 1995. The review is complete and no further visits are planned. The committee's report is awaited.

North Ponds, Aldermaston

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans are being discussed with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution to improve facilities for the

collection and eventual discharge of water that accumulates in the North Ponds area of the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston; what the estimated cost of improvements will be; and when he expects work will be completed. [26349]

Mr. Freeman: Improvements in the water management arrangements in the North Ponds area of the Aldermaston site have been devised in consultation with Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and other regulatory bodies. The work is expected to cost several million pounds and be completed in 1997.

Weapons Transportation

Mr. Wilshire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) how many times during 1995 MOD weapons and ammunition have been transported on scheduled services of civil airlines; and which airlines have been used; [25569]

(2) how long the munitions transported from Hong Kong to London by British Airways on 4 April were left at Heathrow airport; and what factors led to their not being collected immediately on arrival. [25570]

Mr. Soames: I will write to the hon. Member and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Royal Navy (Universities)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which universities have Royal Navy units; where they are located; in each case, what is the annual cost; and how many students are members and how many were recruited to the Royal Navy for the latest year for which figures are available. [26722]

Mr. Soames: The information sought is as follows:

Name	*Cost (£) FY 1994–95*	*Number of students*	*Students entering RN in 1994–95*
Aberdeen	461,053	50	5
Birmingham[1]	261,648	33	0
Bristol	356,282	50	4
Cambridge[1]	285,907	36	1
Cardiff[1]	361,911	33	0
Glasgow	409,195	50	5
Hull[1]	284,064	35	0
Liverpool	346,956	50	2
London	365,847	50	4
Manchester	357,160	50	0
Newcastle[1]	240,252	33	0
Oxford[1]	251,017	31	0
Southampton	346,671	50	2
Sussex	385,320	50	0

[1] Established in September 1994.

Greenpeace

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many files the Ministry of Defence police confiscated following their raid on Greenpeace headquarters in London; how many related to Aldermaston; when he expects these files to be returned; and if he will make a statement. [26510]

Mr. Soames: Ministry of Defence police removed a small number of documents after their search of Greenpeace headquarters on 17 May 1995, all of which were relevant to Aldermaston, including drainage pit No. 20. No relevant document will be returned until after the conclusion of any court proceedings.

Waste Management

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what improvements are being proposed, planned or are at present being made to the radioactive waste management area of the Atomic Weapons Establishment, Aldermaston, aside from the construction of A91; what the estimated costs of these improvements will be; and when he expects any work will be completed. [26350]

Mr. Freeman: There is a continuing programme of improvements to facilities at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston. This includes those in the so-called radioactive waste management area, although waste management as an activity is conducted at various parts of the site. It has been the practice of successive Governments not to disclose the cost of constituent elements of the nuclear warhead programme, although construction of building A91 is the largest single capital cost associated with waste management at AWE.

MEADS

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy towards United Kingdom participation in the medium extended air defence system project; and if he will make a statement. [26092]

Mr. Freeman: We are currently assessing whether we have a national requirement for ballistic missile defence and, as I announced to the House on 18 October 1994, *Official Report*, column 239, we have placed a contract with a consortium led by British Aerospace to provide advice on options, capabilities, timescales, costs and technical risk. MEADS is being assessed as one of the candidate options within this study.

D5 Missiles

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) *Official Report*, 9 May, column *406*, how many D5 missiles HMS Vanguard picked up from Kings bay prior to her deployment; how many D5 missiles are currently held at Coulport; and what means, other than transport by Trident submarine, his Department employs to transfer D5 missiles from King's bay to Coulport. [26093]

Mr. Soames: HMS Vanguard collected 16 unarmed Trident II D5 missiles from Kings bay prior to deployment; none are held at the Royal Naval armament depot, Coulport. Vanguard class SSBNs are the only means by which these missiles are transported from the Us to the United Kingdom.

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those sales involving surplus land and property in which his Department has inserted a clause in the sale contract allowing his Department to obtain a share of any future development gain; and if he will make a statement. [26325]

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Greenham Common

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received concerning the future use of the site of the former airbase at Greenham common for the purpose of exporting livestock. [26608]

Mr. Soames: My Department has received no representations about the use of Greenham common for exporting livestock.

RAF Welford

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what options are being considered for the future use of RAF Welford. [26609]

Mr. Soames: RAF Welford has been used by the United States Air Force since the second world war as a conventional weapons storage and maintenance area. The RAF took over spare capacity at the site on 1 April for long-term use as a centralised conventional weapons storage facility. At present, no other options are being considered for the future use of RAF Welford.

Russia

Mr. Gill: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *392*, what factors apart from the progress of reforms in Russia informs his Department's assessment that Russia currently poses no direct military threat to the United Kingdom. [26755]

Mr. Soames: Whilst placing great importance on the further progress of reform in Russia, we believe that the restructuring and reductions in Russia's military capabilities and procurement programmes over the past five years, the dissolution of the Warsaw pact and the transformed political map of Europe, mean that the warning time of a credible strategic threat re-emerging can now be measured in years.

Boscombe Down

Mr. Key: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many people are currently employed at A and AEE Boscombe down in each of the categories *(a)* military personnel, *(b)* civilian staff, *(c)* contractors and *(d)* others. [26640]

Mr. Soames: This is a matter for the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency DERA—under its framework document. I have asked the chief executive, DERA to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from John Chisholm to Mr. Robert Key, dated 6 June 1995:

In todays written answer the Secretary of State for Defence informed you that I would be replying to your question concerning the number of people currently employed at Boscombe Down since I am now responsible for the day to day running of the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA), which includes the Defence Test and Evaluation Organisation (DTEO) site at Boscombe Down, formerly A&AEE.

The numbers of people in their respective categories are currently as follows:

Civilians	*Military*	*Contractors*	*Others*	*Total*
1060	497	450	42	2049

I hope this is helpful.

Film Badges

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what comparisons have been made between film badges of the type used in British nuclear tests in the 1950s and 1960s and those used in the nuclear industry currently, with particular reference to sensitivity to temperature and humidity. [26664]

Mr. Soames: In terms of sensitivity to temperature and humidity, there is little fundamental difference between the film badges used during the United Kingdom's atmospheric nuclear test programmes and those that remain in use today.

University of Wales Air Squadron

Mr. Peter Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the activities and value of the University of Wales squadron at Royal Air Force, Saint Athan. [26695]

Mr. Soames: The aim of the University of Wales Air Squadron is to encourage air mindedness within the university and to attract entrants of good quality and education into the RAF. The activities of all university air squadrons are pursuant to this aim: generally, a full three-year training syllabus for each individual comprises 99 hours tuition on the Bulldog aircraft.

In the past, the University of Wales air squadron has produced a higher than average number of pilot entrants to the RAF. However, the increased competition for places over the last three years due to the low RAF recruiting targets has resulted in poor recruitment from the squadron during this time.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer to the hon. member for Linlithgow of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *158*, when he expects to draw conclusions about Gulf war syndrome. [25098]

Mr. Soames: Investigations into the alleged Gulf war syndrome are continuing in the United Kingdom and in North America. To date, no convincing medical or scientific evidence has emerged for a Gulf related syndrome from any of this work.

Departmental Complaints

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what policy and procedures exists for dealing with complaints against his Department by members of the public; when the policy was last updated; what time limit and target for dealing with such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedure exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint. [26225]

Mr. Freeman: There is no single point of contact in my Department which deals with complaints from members of the public. Complaints against my

Department are referred in the first instance to the appropriate secretariat for answer. As with all correspondence, my official are required to deal with the matter within 20 days. Although complex cases may take longer, in all instances an initial response should be sent out in 20 days. Any dissatisfied complainant may, of course, refer the matter to their Member of Parliament.

Market Testing

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what work has been contracted out *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* by agencies for which his Department is responsible in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what is projected for 1995–96. [25553]

Mr. Freeman: Details of activities contracted out by the Ministry of Defence, including defence agencies, under the Government's "Competing for Quality" initiative, in the years 1993–94 and 1994–95 are set out in the table. It is not yet known what work will be contracted out in 1995–96; this will depend upon the outcome of feasibility studies which determine how activities can best be exposed to competition from the private sector, and the results of the subsequent competitions.

	£million
Contracted out following market test	
1 April 1993–31 March 1994	
Airfield services, RAF Gibraltar	1.44
1 April 1994–31 March 1995	
Industrial mess (catering and stewardship Function) Mill Hill	0.68
2nd line engineering support, Flag Officer Naval Aviation, Yeovilton	6.20
Nimrod Major Servicing Unit, RAF Kinloss	7.49
	15.81
Contracted out without Market Test	
1 April 1993–31 March 1994	
British Forces Hong Kong school bus service	0.42
British Forces Hong Kong furniture repair	0.43
AWE Aldermaston	275.00
Combat systems information management team	0.03
Catering strategy study, UK Land Forces	22.10
Data entry, Met Office Bracknell	0.12
Government Pipeline and Storage System	9.66
Repair of Defence Accommodation Store, Quedgeley	1.40
1 April 1994–31 March 1995	
Parachute transport flight, RAF Hullavington	0.32
Electronic Warfare training tasks, 360 Sqn, RAF Wyton	18.50
British Forces Hong Kong food supply	1.52
British Forces Hong Kong curtain manufacture	0.01
British Forces Hong Kong Support Services	4.90
Station Engineering management Aid, (Maintenance Analysis and Computing Division)—RAF Swanton Moreley	0.72
NAAFI food study	25.49
Air weapons range, Rosehearty	0.32
Support Services, Akrotiri, Cyprus	4.18
The Queens Flight, (engineering support) RAF Northolt	2.29
Wireless stations, (operation and maintenance) Inskip and Crimond	2.84
Support for Parachute Training	3.05
Mobile Civilian Artisan Groups, Germany	5.70
Freight Services, Germany	2.20
	381.20
Total	397.01

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26241]

Mr. Freeman: My Department aims to reply fully to all letters from members of the public within 20 days. Letters are referred to the appropriate secretariat, which is responsible for ensuring that this target is met. Central records are therefore not kept and could not be provided without disproportionate cost.

Telephone calls to my Department's switchboard are logged automatically and should normally be answered within 15 seconds. Data on the number of telephone calls and the time taken to answer is recorded. The latest information is as follows:

Number of calls received (May 1995): 101,129
Percentage answered within 15 seconds: 99.3 per cent.

Rosyth Dockyard

Ms Rachel Squire: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on when he will meet the trade union representatives for Rosyth dockyard to discuss the impact of privatisation on the arrangements for pension and redundancy entitlements. [27247]

Mr. Freeman: I have met representatives of the employees of Rosyth Royal Dockyard plc during recent visits to Rosyth and am, subject to time constraints and other commitments, prepared to do so again during any future visits. I am also prepared to meet the relevant national trades union officers as and when appropriate as part of my Department's wider commitment to inform and consult about the proposed privatisation of Rosyth dockyard, as I and my predecessor have in the past.

Companies

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list those companies in which the holder of his office is a majority shareholder which *(a)* are currently in existence and *(b)* have been wound up in the past five years. [25721]

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 22 May 1995]:* The only company currently in existence in which my right hon. and learned Friend is a majority shareholder is IMS Ltd. No such companies have been wound up in the past five years.

Republic of Ireland (Sea Boundary)

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to meet his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland with a view to delimiting the territorial sea boundary between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. [25928]

Mr. Hurd: I have been asked to reply.

There are no plans to hold a ministerial meeting to discuss this matter.

Diversification

Mr. David Young: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when he last visited the north-west of England

to discuss defence diversification and if he will make a statement. [25231]

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

I have not visited the north-west for the purpose of discussing defence diversification. It is a matter for companies to decide whether, and into which markets, they should diversify. However, my Department monitors how the defence industry is responding to the defence downturn and has produced a manual, "Changing Tack: New Perspectives for Defence Suppliers", which provides guidance and advice on diversification. It is also participating in a NATO advanced studies institute on defence diversification which will be held in Scotland this July and has contributed £5,622 in support of costs. Some companies are eligible for assistance, to help them adjust to changing markets, through non-sector specific UK schemes and some projects may qualify for European Community funding through the KONVER scheme.

SCOTLAND

Conservative Party Conference

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the cost to public funds of hosting the recent Conservative party conference in Scotland; and how much was borne by *(a)* Strathclyde regional council—Strathclyde police—and *(b)* any other bodies involved in expenditure for this conference. [25044]

Mr. Kynoch: I understand from the chief constable of Strathclyde police that, although full details of all the costs incurred are not yet available, it is likely that additional costs of around £22,800 will have been incurred in policing the conference. Details of costs of any other public sector bodies involved with the conference are not held centrally.

Housing (Energy Efficiency)

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to improve the energy efficiency of Scottish housing. [25133]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Substantial resources of nearly £1 billion have been made available to local authorities and new town development corporations and Scottish Homes respectively in 1995–96 for investment in housing. These allocations are generally not earmarked for specific purposes and it is for local authorities, new town development corporations and Scottish Homes to invest in energy efficiency measures in accordance with their assessment of local housing needs and priorities.

In addition, the Scottish building regulations are currently being revised to set more demanding standards for energy efficiency in new build.

Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he concluded his consultation on the area of the Strathclyde passenger transport authority; what was the final total number of representations; how many of those favoured the present Strathclyde regional council boundary; when he expects to announce the outcome of his consideration; and if he will make a statement. [25620]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The consultation concluded on 31 January, though some responses were received after that date. The final total number of responses received, which contained a wide range of views, was 147.

Consideration of the responses is continuing, and we shall announce the result in the near future.

Patients

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many patients were struck off general practitioners' lists in each health board during the last year for which figures are available. [26109]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information as set out in the table relates to the period April 1994—March 1995.

Health board	*Number*
Argyll and Clyde	489
Ayrshire and Arran	374
Borders	10
Dumfries and Galloway	82
Fife	206
Forth Valley	261
Grampian	262
Greater Glasgow	2,375
Highland	42
Lanarkshire	659
Lothian	969
Orkney	0
Shetland	2
Tayside	503
Western Isles	5
Total	6,239

Asthma Medication

Mrs. Ray Michie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the expenditure on general practitioner prescribed anti-asthma medication and preparations in each health board in Scotland giving the figures for *(a)* net ingredient costs and *(b)* net ingredient cost per capita for 1994–95. [25961]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information by health board and Scotland for the financial year 1994–95 is set out in the table. The costs shown are based on the value of ingredients before the addition of dispensing fees or deduction of any discount or patient charges.

The costs relate only to inhaled and oral adrenoceptor stimulants, inhaled steroids, inhaled antimuscarinic bronchodilators and theophylline preparations.

	Cost of medication £ million	*Cost per patient on GP lists (£)*
Health Board		
Argyll and Clyde	3.570	8.06
Ayrshire and Arran	3.966	10.12
Borders	0.948	8.80
Dumfries and Galloway	1.193	7.80
Fife	2.623	7.44
Forth Valley	2.272	7.83
Grampian	3.954	7.22
Greater Glasgow	8.087	8.13
Highland	1.400	6.58
Lanarkshire	5.067	8.68

	Cost of medication £ million	Cost per patient on GP lists (£)
Lothian	5.643	7.03
Orkney	0.130	6.47
Shetland	0.111	4.82
Tayside	3.930	9.58
Western Isles	0.172	5.77
Unallocated prescriptions	0.062	—
Scotland	43.128	8.03

Rooflessness

Mr. Watson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how he has defined *(a)* homelessness and *(b)* rooflessness for the purposes of current research into rooflessness in Scotland; and what distinction he draws between the two definitions; [26587]

(2) what policy options he had developed in preparing a response to the current Scottish Office research into rooflessness in Scotland; and what additional resources he has earmarked to tackle rough sleeping in preparing his expenditure plans for 1996–97; [26590]

(3) what is the total cost of the Scottish Office research project into rooflessness in Scotland; what proportion is being met by Scottish Homes and what proportion by the Scottish Office; and what proportion of the Scottish Office research budget for housing is taken up by the Scottish Office share of costs for the rooflessness research. [26589]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The total planned cost of the rooflessness project is £91,666. The Scottish office and Scottish Homes will contribute 28 per cent. each of the cost, and the European Commission 44 per cent. The Scottish Office contributions account for 5 per cent. of its 1994–95 housing research budget, and an estimated 6 per cent. of the 1995–96 budget.

Homelessness is a wider category than rooflessness and the Department publishes annual homelessness statistics based on the definition in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987. However this research is confined to rooflessness which is generally equated with sleeping rough, but the research includes the development of an instrument to allow consistent measurement of rooflessness across a range of statutory voluntary agencies, covering such aspects as the time spent roofless and the number of continuous periods of rooflessness.

The study's figures on the prevalence of rooflessness in Scotland will be taken into account in policy and expenditure decisions, together with other sources on the needs of roofless people.

Rough Sleepers

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what proportion of the additional capital allocations for homelessness made available to housing authorities since 1991 has been specifically targeted on people sleeping rough. [26378]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Additional resources totalling almost £30 million were made available to local authorities for homeless projects from 1991 to 1994. Of this over £7.5 million, or 25 per cent., related to the provision of temporary accommodation which would particularly benefit people who were sleeping rough.

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the current level of services to people sleeping rough. [26379]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is not available centrally on rooflessness services provided by statutory and voluntary bodies, and moreover services will often be used by other categories of homeless people as well as roofless people. However, we would expect local housing authorities, which have both the primary statutory responsibility for tackling homelessness, and also a duty to assess housing needs for their areas, to take account of the needs of roofless people in preparing their housing programmes. These programmes will inform authorities' capital allocations. At national level, we are undertaking research to produce during 1996 estimates of the prevalence of rooflessness in Scotland.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to the number of accesses made to the police national computer by each constabulary over the last year; and what was the proportion of access requests made to the vehicles indexes of the police national computer. [26397]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the table.

Police forces	Accesses	Percentage vehicles
Central Scotland	178,710	48.0
Dumfries and Galloway	171,484	60.4
Fife	171,149	52.7
Grampian	323,399	47.0
Lothian and Borders	830,210	63.1
Northern	148,029	42.4
Strathclyde	1,477,896	42.8
Tayside	311,142	47.4

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many accesses were made to each index of the police national computer over the last year, indicating the number of access requests that involved searching more than one index. [26396]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Data on the police national computer are stored on five databases. The number of transactions made by Scottish police forces, including transactions involving additional or retrial of information or both, undertaken on each database in the 12 months to 30 April 1995 is shown in the table. It is not possible to confirm whether transactions undertaken on separate databases are linked, with the exception of those undertaken on both the names and the fingerprint databases. There were 8,994 transactions which involved the use of both of these databases.

	Number
Vehicles	1,780,205
Stolen property	18,205
Names	1,655,442
Fingerprints	9,748
Crime Pattern Analysis	0

Scottish Natural Heritage

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the current system at Scottish Natural Heritage for dealing with inquiries from hon. Members. [26380]

Sir Hector Monro: When enquiries relate to day-to-day management and individual cases hon. Members are encouraged to communicate directly with Scottish Natural Heritage. Where questions arise involving broader policy or strategic issues hon. Members are advised to write to the Secretary of State or the appropriate junior Minister.

Mr. Galbraith: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up a system at Scottish Natural Heritage to provide hon. Members with information and advice; and if he will make a statement. [26381]

Sir Hector Monro: The system which Scottish Natural Heritage presently uses was established in 1992 following a scrutiny of ministerial correspondence undertaken by the efficiency unit of the Cabinet Office. There are no plans to introduce a new system.

Healthy Eating

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list his Department's projects aimed at promoting healthy eating, indicating the cost of each project to his Department. [26302]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: As foreshadowed in "Scotland's Health—A Challenge To Us All", the policy statement issued in 1992, a number of experimental projects have been mounted in selected urban partnership areas to explore ways of encouraging healthy eating. These are as listed with the respective costs of each:

Area	*Cost £*
Wester Hailes, Edinburgh	37,580
Castlemilk, Glasgow	42,000
Ferguslie Park, Paisley	11,095
Whitfield, Dundee	9,000

Assistance totalling £11,200 has also been made available to the Barri Grubb good food project in Pilton, Edinburgh, while the following projects have received funding under the urban programme:

Area	*Cost £*
Govan Healthy Eating Project, Glasgow	268,680
Castlemilk Foodstore Project, Glasgow	162,000

The promotion of healthy eating is among the priority topics for the Health Education Board for Scotland and, in 1994–95, the board spent some £347,000 on initiatives in this area.

In addition to these specific activities, the Scottish Diet Action group, led by my noble and learned Friend, the Minister of State, is engaged in the preparation of an action plan for delivering the dietary targets announced by my right hon. Friend in November 1994.

Custodial Deaths

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people aged 25 years and under have died *(a)* in prison and *(b)* in police custody in Scotland in (i) 1993, (ii) 1994 and (iii) so far this year. [26377]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of deaths in *(a)* prison and *(b)* police custody of those aged 25 years and under for the years 1993, 1994 and to date in 1995 is set out in the table:

	1993	*1994*	*1995*
Prison Custody	3	10	1
Police Custody	1	2	0
Total	4	12	1

Light Pollution

Mr. Maclennan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he is taking to address the problem of light pollution. [26319]

Sir Hector Monro: Officials of the Scottish Office Environment Department wrote to all district and islands councils in April of this year to ask about their experiences of dealing with complaints about light pollution. Local authorities' responses are now being considered by the Department. However, preliminary findings suggest that light pollution is a minor problem in Scotland with the majority of complaints being dealt with on an informal basis by local authorities.

Anti-competitive Behaviour

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints his Department received in the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 alleging anti-competitive behaviour by local authorities in Scotland under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988; and, as a result, how many local authorities were subsequently issued under a section 19a notice or 19b direction. [26711]

Mr. Lang: In 1990–91, we received six complaints of anti-competitive behaviour under the Local Government Act 1988: these resulted in one notice—under section 13 of that Act—and one direction—under section 14 of that Act—being issued. In 1991–92, we received five complaints: these resulted in four notices and four directions being issued. In 1992–93, we received four complaints: these resulted in two notices. In 1993–94, we received 10 complaints: these have resulted in six notices.

Cashmere Goats

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will extend the hill livestock compensatory allowances and sheep annual premium payments to include cashmere goats; [26685]

(2) what is his policy in respect of subsidised cashmere production in less favoured areas of Scotland. [26686]

Mr. Lang: The Government are keen to encourage the development of alternative land uses such as cashmere goat production where they can be shown to have a profitable future without a continuing dependence on subsidy. It is therefore not the Government's policy to seek to extend the coverage of livestock subsidies to include cashmere goats.

GREAT BRITAIN HOUSE OF COMMONS
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES (HANSARD)
1994/1995

Published on microfiche by Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
The Quorum, Barnwell Road
Cambridge CB5 8SW
England

Distributed in the USA by Chadwyck-Healey Inc.
1101 King Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
USA

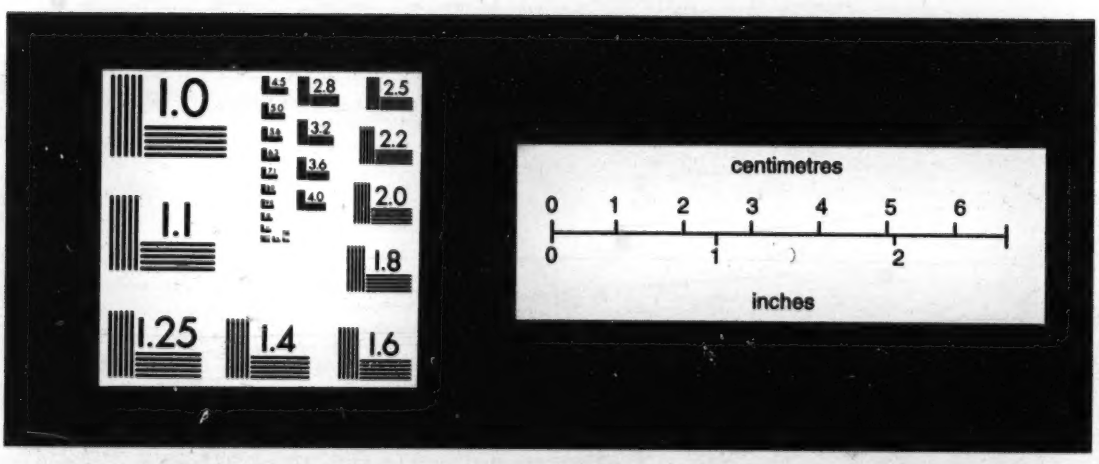
Date of publication: 1995/1996

Reproduction rights: © Parliamentary copyright 1994/1995. Reproduced by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Microfiche edition: © 1995/1996 Chadwyck-Healey Ltd. The arrangement of these papers on microfiche is the copyright of Chadwyck-Healey Ltd.

Technical data: Film type: positive silver halide, archivally permanent microfiche conforming to AIIM and BSI standards.

Producing laboratory: International Imaging



Local Government Surpluses and Deficits

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government Act 1988, surpluses achieved by local authority direct labour—service organisations in Scotland for the financial years 1992–1993 and 1993–1994; [26768]

(2) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved on trading accounts for the financial years 1992–1993 and 1993–1994 for *(a)* refuse collection, *(b)* street cleaning, *(c)* building cleaning, *(d)* school and welfare catering, *(e)* other catering, *(f)* vehicle maintenance, *(g)* grounds maintenance and *(h)* sports and leisure maintenance delivered by local authorities' direct labour-services organisations in Scotland under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988. [26767]

Mr. Lang: The following tables show the surpluses, and deficits, returned by authorities for 1992–1993 and 1993–94:

Surpluses/deficits on DLO/DSO activity in 1992–93 in £s

Local Authority	*Refuse collection*[1]	*Building cleaning*	*Other cleaning*[1]	*School and welfare catering*	*Other catering*	*Ground maintenance*	*Vehicle maintenance*	*Leisure management*
Aberdeen DC		8,822			17,446	591,314	86,550	443,877
Angus DC	127,622	17,266	81,572			194,384	18,111	16,139
Annandale and Eskdale DC	93,432		20,734			120,687		29,294
Argyll and Bute DC	2,000		25,000			95,331	11,318	3,000
Badenoch and Strathspey DC	23,746					28,981		
Banff and Buchan DC	22,965	2,876				113,165	12,647	
Bearsden and Milngavie DC			52,378			98,020		5,749
Berwickshire DC	49,950					44,906		6,122
Borders RC		–172,000		–51,000			78,000	
Caithness DC						52,580		13,729
Central RC		556,453		163,181	6,292		51,680	
Clackmannan DC	40,000					96,000	16,000	
Clydebank DC						132,473		42,045
Clydesdale DC	74,391		20,041			96,830		58,788
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	33,969					5,198	15,154	7,787
Cumnock and Doon Valley DC	40,420		18,755			16,753		2,973
Cunninghame DC	26,092	19,254	18,829			106,047	3,780	71,252
Dumbarton DC	27,165	–135,002	50,749		–175	96,553		100,322
Dumfries and Galloway RC			406,000	157,000		20,000	59,000	
Dundee DC	317,932	2,924	143,412			250,551		72,000
Dunfermline DC		21,000				98,428	7,926	0
East Kilbride DC	56,939		50,313			51,648	12,627	401,280
East Lothian DC	97,577	10,158				60,093		134,658
Eastwood DC	23,272	1,142	24,720			24,881		27,187
Edinburgh DC	79,111	63,097	86,771		–34,966	199,140	100,524	35,170
Ettrick and Lauderdale DC			67,822			54,235		66,748
Falkirk DC	77,000	4,000	134,000			305,000	6,000	65,000
Fife RC		522,000		205,000	2,000		19,000	
Glasgow DC	914,896	90,994	265,576		148,629	1,116,950	129,212	195,021
Gordon DC	10,000		102,000			57,000		
Grampian RC		–10,000		204,000	5,000	108,000	187,000	
Hamilton DC	231,782					135,682		246,906
Highland RC		295,722		465,010		391,917		
Inverclyde DC	186,367		131,010			3,504	66,154	77,138
Inverness DC	122,433		81,067			66,633	39,393	77,582
Kilmarnock and Loudoun DC	125,000	2,000	63,000		6,000	58,000	32,000	11,000
Kincardine and Deeside DC	9,529					73,537		21,893
Kirkcaldy DC	96,192	15,048	59,105			229,085	142,143	156,093
Kyle and Carrick DC		30,408				38,993	12,963	159,246
Lochaber DC						6,533		12,394
Lothian RC		166,945		47,344	12,125		69,701	–290,516
Midlothian DC	78,000	–2,000				154,000	6,000	28,000
Monklands DC	67,717	23,028	135,366			157,920	27,410	
Moray DC	22,025		54,647			61,418	31,030	
Motherwell DC		6,937	516,884		21,208	134,065	55,824	219,195
Nairn DC								–2,567
Nithsdale DC	700		200			2,550		64,899
North East Fife DC	45,000		203,000			93,000		54,000
Orkney IC	22,000	60,000			8,000	14,000	9,000	
Perth and Kinross DC	21,106	26,349	105,626				53,207	147,714
Renfrew DC	325,000	8,000	80,000			401,000	42,000	
Ross and Cromarty DC	34,000					–42,000		28,726
Roxburgh DC	11,980		3,831			76,574	4,545	30,180
Shetland IC	10,000	8,000	30,000		78,000	77,000	34,000	
Skye and Lochalsh DC	3,771	4,705	17,145			5,830		–12,007
Stewartry DC	31,598					63,443		
Stirling DC	71,200	1,300	9,600			84,800	8,900	4,700
Strathclyde RC		237,407		237,808	11,243	41,818	84,377	

Surpluses/deficits on DLO/DSO activity in 1992–93 in £s

Local Authority	Refuse collection[1]	Building cleaning	Other cleaning[1]	School and welfare catering	Other catering	Ground maintenance	Vehicle maintenance	Leisure management
Strathkelvin DC	202,000					91,000		22,000
Sutherland DC	16,223					43,554		7,238
Tayside RC		6,000		363,000			102,000	
Tweeddale DC	14,000					10,000		17,000
Western Isles IC	3,000	16,000	73,000	44,000		–43,000	19,000	
West Lothian DC	99,547					205,916	4,135	122,874
Wigtown DC			23,908			141,701		156,222
Cumbernauld NT						77,000		
East Kilbride NT								
Glenrothes NT						133,000		
Irvine NT						43,038		
Livingston NT						38,000		

[1] The accounts for refuse collection an other cleaning may have been combined by some authorities.
1. The absence of an entry, therefore, does not necessarily indicate that the DSO has not carried out the activity in question.

Surpluses/deficits on DLO/DSO activity in 1992–93 in £s

Local Authority	Refuse collection[1]	Building cleaning	Other cleaning[1]	School and welfare catering	Other catering	Ground maintenance	Vehicle maintenance	Leisure management
Aberdeen DC	35,938	2,747			41,002	968,329	50,353	678,929
Angus DC	227,756	32,732	81,518			173,254	15,769	112,629
Annandale and Eskdale DC	104,174		16,279			31,190		25,170
Argyll and Bute DC	20,000		20,000			17,000	8,000	15,000
Badenoch and Strathspey DC	11,665		6,142			18,990		
Banff and Buchan DC	30,748	1,706				164,143	26,640	
Bearsden and Milngavie DC	232,081					91,133		900
Berwickshire DC	41,532					36,044		1,424
Borders RC				–91,000			91,000	
Caithness DC								
Central RC		659,419		29,375	9,010		87,336	
Clackmannan DC	20,000	0				37,000	13,000	
Clydebank DC	61,130		34,463			175,472		4,827
Clydesdale DC	87,365		92,000			11,854		19,221
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	–46,240					4,094	4,855	23,832
Cumnock and Doon Valley DC	54,578		25,472			3,362		4,857
Cunninghame DC	27,683	16,309	19,676			42,206	15,565	54,793
Dumbarton DC	–61,590	–96,333	18,579			132,985	168,874	
Dumfries and Galloway RC			36,000	194,000		40,000	92,000	
Dundee DC	218,797	23,674	29,912			172,402		72,000
Dunfermline DC	99,592	16,000				23,428	9,687	0
East Kilbride DC	113,453		106,160			85,836	28,263	360,149
East Lothian DC	67,358	2,120				116,018		50,945
Eastwood DC	40,708		7,864			39,382		8,954
Edinburgh DC	118,904	80,676	139,245		–8,474	174,214	155,095	0
Ettrick and Lauderdale DC			73,985			87,549		44,243
Falkirk DC	81,000	5,000	147,000			301,000	13,000	95,000
Fife RC		128,000		162,000	1,000		76,000	
Glasgow DC	685,835	191,972	218,187		64,354	1,155,537	94,588	262,309
Gordon DC	11,000		127,000			79,000		
Grampian RC		–155,000		290,000	12,000	184,000	440,000	
Hamilton DC	67,337					175,132	18,459	287,894
Highland RC		251,003		218,028				
Inverclyde DC	170,413		106,002			35,587	300,068	95,784
Inverness DC	214,720		106,245			73,205	3,829	24,633
Kilmarnock and Loudoun DC	53,000	2,000	52,000		5,000	46,000	15,000	1,000
Kincardine and Deeside DC	9,529					73,537		21,893
Kirkcaldy DC	144,537	4,405	118,477			304,100	127,056	188,408
Kyle and Carrick DC	70,905	3,897				29,699	7,523	122,624
Lochaber DC	12,756					31,105		7,832
Lothian RC		38,975		75,051	10,580		88,915	–259,690
Midlothian DC	81,000	0				117,000	46,000	177,000
Monklands DC	12,850	12,070	62,472			21,373	93,091	70,836
Moray DC	19,262	7,380	87,987			35,834	73,800	
Motherwell DC		7,633	355,485		5,689	36,624	43,558	
Nairn DC	17,140					11,014		2,393
Nithsdale DC	500		200			1,757		24,221
North East Fife DC	20,000		136,000			47,000		40,000
Orkney IC	–17,000	56,000			36,000	17,000	41,000	
Perth and Kinross DC	26,343	11,094	48,741				44,134	227,964
Renfrew DC	264,000	18,000	68,000		2,000	313,000	72,000	108,000

Surpluses/deficits on DLO/DSO activity in 1992–93 in £s

Local Authority	*Refuse collection*[1]	*Building cleaning*	*Other cleaning*[1]	*School and welfare catering*	*Other catering*	*Ground maintenance*	*Vehicle maintenance*	*Leisure management*
Ross and Cromarty DC	2,000					7,000		16,731
Roxburgh DC	13,244		18,761			79,528	2,253	22,831
Shetland IC	453,000	54,000	14,000		82,000	92,000	67,000	
Skye and Lochalsh DC		497				1,599		9,252
Stewartry DC	58,901					44,053		
Stirling DC	105,600	18,100	46,500			50,600	3,000	35,300
Strathclyde RC		500,331		100,043	11,671	57,830	42,959	
Strathkelvin DC	142,000					144,000		27,500
Sutherland DC	20,513					38,278		525
Tayside RC		58,000		408,000			45,000	
Tweeddale DC								
Western Isles IC	67,000	23,000	62,000	24,000	4,000	6,000		
West Lothian DC	178,996					167,428	12,976	117,160
Wigtown DC			23,602			92,963		59,405
Cumbernauld NT						190,000		
East Kilbride NT								
Glenrothes NT						119,000		
Irvine NT						35,576		
Livingston NT						14,000		

[1] The accounts for refuse collection an other cleaning may have been combined by some authorities.
1. The absence of an entry, therefore, does not necessarily indicate that the DSO has not carried out the activity in question.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will list, by authority and service area, as defined by the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980, surpluses achieved by local authority direct labour-services organisations in Scotland for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94; [26766]

(2) if he will list, by authority, the surplus achieved on trading accounts for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94 for *(a)* general highways work, *(b)* construction and maintenance of sewers, *(c)* works of new construction and *(d)* maintenance work, delivered by local authorities' direct labour-services organisations in Scotland under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980. [26765]

Mr. Lang: The following tables show the surpluses, and deficits, returned by authorities for 1992–93 and 1993–94 in relation to the categories of account laid down under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980:

Surpluses/deficits on DLO/DSO activity in 1992–93 in £s

Local authority	*New construction under £50,000*	*New construction over £50,000*	*Building maintenance*	*General highways work*	*General water and sewerage work*
Aberdeen DC	—	—	276,110	—	—
Angus DC	—	—	—	—	—
Annandale and Eskdale DC	—	—	—	—	—
Argyll and Bute DC	—	—	57,391	—	—
Badenoch and Strathspey DC	—	—	—	—	—
Banff and Buchan DC	—	—	1,761	—	—
Bearsden and Milngavie DC	—	—	28,915	—	—
Berwickshire DC	—	—	—	—	—
Borders RC	—	—	—	169,000	—
Caithness DC	—	—	37,606	—	—
Central RC	1,378	3,667	49,703	224,586	24,535
Clackmannan DC	—	—	23,000	—	—
Clydebank DC	—	—	219,498	—	—
Clydesdale DC	—	—	34,381	—	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	—	—	57,918	—	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley DC	—	—	55,143	—	—
Cunninghame DC	—	—	366,000	—	—
Dumbarton DC	—	—	150,857	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway RC	—	—	7,619	109,780	—
Dundee DC	4,667	15,208	430,356	—	—
Dunfermline DC	—	—	—	—	—
East Kilbride DC	—	—	—	—	—
East Lothian DC	—	—	67,271	—	—
Eastwood DC	—	—	—	—	—
Edinburgh DC	—	—	448,750	—	—
Ettrick and Lauderdale DC	—	—	19,104	—	—
Falkirk DC	—	—	325,000	—	—
Fife RC	10,000	−358,000	311,000	1,000	5,000
Glasgow DC	—	—	9,274,493	—	—
Gordon DC	—	—	—	—	—

Surpluses/deficits on DLO/DSO activity in 1992–93 in £s

Local authority	*New construction under £50,000*	*New construction over £50,000*	*Building maintenance*	*General highways work*	*General water and sewerage work*
Grampian RC	—	—	—	501,000	31,000
Hamilton DC	—	—	162,653	—	—
Highland RC	—	—	—	2,128,575	—
Inverclyde DC	—	—	304,594	—	—
Inverness DC	—	—	94,194	—	—
Kilmarnock and Loudoun DC	—	—	247,000	—	—
Kincardine and Deeside DC	—	—	—	—	—
Kirkcaldy DC	—	—	68,224	—	—
Kyle and Carrick DC	—	—	60,454	—	—
Lochaber DC	—	—	64,113	—	—
Lothian RC	—	—	174,313	451,113	161,662
Midlothian DC	—	—	44,000	—	—
Monklands DC	—	—	51,000	—	—
Moray DC	—	—	95,100	—	—
Motherwell DC	—	—	200,159	—	—
Nairn DC	—	—	—	—	—
Nithsdale DC	—	—	45,222	—	—
North East Fife DC	—	—	50,000	—	—
Orkney IC	—	—	6,000	269,000	2,000
Perth and Kinross DC	—	—	67,703	—	—
Renfrew DC	—	—	748,622	—	—
Ross and Cromarty DC	—	—	96,000	—	—
Roxburgh DC	—	—	10,000	—	—
Shetland IC	—	—	166,000	595,000	—
Skye and Lochalsh DC	—	—	–45,022	—	—
Stewarty DC	—	—	—	—	—
Stirling DC	—	—	92,500	—	—
Strathclyde RC	174,602	7,734	787,281	339,025	60,302
Strathkelvin DC	—	—	149,000	—	—
Sutherland DC	—	—	—	—	—
Tayside RC	—	—	36,000	1,497,000	—
Tweeddale DC	—	—	64,000	—	—
Western Isles IC	—	—	3,000	54,000	—
West Lothian DC	—	—	169,954	—	—
Wigtown DC	—	—	118,208	—	—
Cumbernauld NT	—	—	144,000	—	—
East Kilbride NT	—	—	125,000	—	—
Glenrothes NT	—	—	77,000	—	—
Irvine NT	—	—	—	—	—
Livingston NT	—	—	89,000	—	—

Surpluses/deficits on DLO/DSO activity in 1993–94 in £s

Local authority	*New construction under £50,000*	*New construction over £50,000*	*Building maintenance*	*General highways work*	*General water and sewerage work*
Aberdeen DC	—	—	259,953	—	—
Angus DC	—	—	—	—	—
Annandale and Eskdale DC	—	—	—	—	—
Argyll and Bute DC	—	—	75,000	—	—
Badenoch and Strathspey DC	—	—	—	—	—
Banff and Buchan DC	—	—	74,711	—	—
Bearsden and Milngavie DC	—	—	37,375	—	—
Berwickshire DC	—	—	—	—	—
Borders RC	—	—	—	742,000	—
Caithness DC	—	—	—	—	—
Central RC	8,241	3,853	262,192	276,991	30,861
Clackmannan DC	—	—	137,000	—	—
Clydebank DC	—	—	82,059	—	—
Clydesdale DC	—	—	38,636	—	—
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	—	—	55,548	—	—
Cumnock and Doon Valley DC	—	—	13,064	—	—
Cunninghame DC	—	—	395,000	—	—
Dumbarton DC	—	—	77,207	—	—
Dumfries and Galloway RC	—	—	–32,795	84,539	—
Dundee DC	7,682	21,837	142,208	—	—
Dunfermline DC	22,996	37,715	47,676	—	—
East Kilbride DC	—	—	—	—	—
East Lothian DC	—	—	27,346	—	—
Eastwood DC	—	—	—	—	—
Edinburgh DC	—	42,837	188,515	—	—

Surpluses/deficits on DLO/DSO activity in 1993–94 in £s

Local authority	*New construction under £50,000*	*New construction over £50,000*	*Building maintenance*	*General highways work*	*General water and sewerage work*
Ettrick and Lauderdale DC	—	—	59,920	—	—
Falkirk DC	—	—	47,000	—	—
Fife RC	4,000	11,000	172,000	1,166,000	78,000
Glasgow DC	—	—	8,966,109	—	—
Gordon DC	—	—	—	—	—
Grampian RC	—	—	—	1,195,000	–137,000
Hamilton DC	—	—	20,790	—	—
Highland RC	—	—	—	3,096,908	—
Inverclyde DC	—	—	76,110	—	—
Inverness DC	—	—	30,373	—	—
Kilmarnock and Loudoun DC	—	—	158,000	—	—
Kincardine and Deeside DC	—	—	—	—	—
Kirkcaldy DC	—	—	139,452	—	—
Kyle and Carrick DC	—	—	65,408	—	—
Lochaber DC	—	—	72,706	—	—
Lothian RC	—	—	120,668	352,354	127,135
Midlothian DC	—	—	13,000	—	—
Monklands DC	—	—	120,622	—	—
Moray DC	—	—	53,999	—	—
Motherwell DC	—	—	485,189	—	—
Nairn DC	—	—	—	—	—
Nithsdale DC	—	—	7,697	—	—
North East Fife DC	—	—	66,000	—	—
Orkney IC	—	–22,000	81,000	615,000	–6,000
Perth and Kinross DC	—	—	103,290	—	—
Renfrew DC	—	—	714,378	—	—
Ross and Cromarty DC	—	—	11,000	—	—
Roxburgh DC	—	—	27,000	—	—
Shetland IC	—	—	261,000	662,000	—
Skye and Lochalsh DC	—	—	—	—	—
Stewarty DC	—	—	—	—	—
Stirling DC	—	—	–74,100	—	—
Strathclyde RC	4,669	11,303	819,583	278,092	151,325
Strathkelvin DC	—	—	59,000	—	—
Sutherland DC	—	—	30,000	—	—
Tayside RC	—	—	—	1,292	—
Tweeddale DC	—	—	—	—	—
Western Isles IC	—	—	19,000	43,000	—
West Lothian DC	—	—	120,538	—	—
Wigtown DC	—	—	59,065	—	—
Cumbernauld NT	—	—	68,000	—	—
East Kilbride NT	—	—	306,000	—	—
Glenrothes NT	—	—	133,000	—	—
Irvine NT	—	—	—	—	—
Livingston NT	—	—	72,000	—	—

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by authority and service area the recorded deficits made by local authority direct labour-services organisations in Scotland that have failed to meet the rate of return requirements under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 expressed in absolute and percentage terms. [26707]

Mr. Lang: The following table shows the deficits recorded and how these related, in percentage terms, to the DLO/DSO's income:

Year	*Local Authority*	*Deficit £*	*Percentage (related to income)*
Building Cleaning			
1990–91	Dumbarton DC	–7,299	–83.4
1990–91	East Lothian DC	–3,000	–2.1
1990–91	Shetland IC	–13,000	–2.6
1991–92	Dumbarton DC	–66,438	–59.6
1992–93	Borders RC	–172,000	–55.7
1992–93	Dumbarton DC	–135,002	–137.8
1992–93	Grampian RC	–10,000	–0.2
1992–93	Midlothian DC	–2,000	–1.4
1993–94	Grampian RC	–155,000	–3.6
1993–94	Dumbarton DC	–96,333	–99.5

Year	Local Authority	Deficit £	Percentage (related to income)
Grounds Maintenance			
1990–91	Strathkelvin DC	–58,708	–12
1990–91	Stirling DC	–7,005	–2.3
1990–91	Moray DC	–122,476	–24.7
1990–91	Highland RC	–84,375	–5.5
1991–92	Stirling DC	–245,779	–49.3
1992–93	Ross and Cromarty DC	–42,000	–4.1
1992–93	Wester Isles IC	–43,000	–9.8
Leisure Management			
1992–93	Lothian RC	–290,516	–49.3
1992–93	Nairn DC	–2,567	–4.1
1992–93	Skye and Lochalsh DC	–12,007	–7.4
1993–94	Lothian RC	–259,690	–47.7
Other Catering			
1990–91	Central RC	–17,156	–4.4
1992–93	Dumbarton DC	–175	–0.3
1992–93	Edinburgh DC	–34,966	–6.4
1993–94	Edinburgh DC	–8,474	–1.3
Other Cleaning			
1991–92	Annandale and Eskdale DC	–24,223	–9.4
Refuse Collection			
1990–91	Kincardine and Deeside DC	–2,484	–0.7
1991–92	Kincardine and Deeside DC	–13,113	–3.3
1991–92	Orkney IC	–6,000	–2.5
1991–92	North East Fife DC	–24,000	–2.7
1993–94	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	–46,240	–5.2
1993–94	Dumbarton DC	–61,590	–4.5
1993–94	Orkney IC	–17,000	–5.7
School and Welfare Catering			
1992–93	Borders RC	–51,000	–3.0
1993–94	Borders RC	–91,000	–8.5
Vehicle Maintenance			
1990–91	Inverness DC	–65,733	–33.9
1990–91	Inverclyde DC	–7,521	–2.5
1990–91	Cumbernauld and Kilsyth DC	–38,495	–29.3
1991–92	Stirling DC	–670	–0.2
1991–92	Clackmannan DC	–2,000	–0.7

Housing Associations

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the conformity with local government legislation and procedures of *(a)* a district council's housing officer to serve as secretary to the board of the local housing association and *(b)* a district council and local housing association retaining the same legal advisers when housing stock is to be transferred between them; and if he will make a statement. [26683]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is common and accepted practice for a local authority sponsoring a new housing association in its area to provide services in kind to the association until it becomes a viable organisation. As to the question of conflict of interest in the case of legal advisers, it is up to both parties and their legal advisers to ensure that such a problem does not arise. If the ballot of tenants results in a vote in favour of transfer to the association, I would expect the parties to engage separate legal advisers to negotiate terms and conditions.

Local Government Contracts

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many and what proportion of local authority direct labour-services organisations in Scotland, operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980, have achieved the required rate of return for the financial year 1992–93 and 1993–94. [26708]

Mr. Lang: In 1992–93, 74 DLOs-DSOs, in an individual service area, met the prescribed financial objective. This represented 94.9 per cent. of the total returns received. In 1993–94, 75 met the prescribed financial objective: this represented 92.6 per cent of the total returns received. The figures for both years include a small number of returns from new town development corporations.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by authority and service area the number of full time equivalent job losses experienced by local authority direct labour-services organisations in Scotland operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94. [26716]

Mr. Lang: My Department does not hold this information.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by authority and service area

the recorded deficits made by local authority direct labour-services organisations in Scotland that have failed to meet the rate of return requirements operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980 for financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94 expressed in both absolute and percentage terms. [26706]

Mr. Lang: The following table shows the deficits recorded and how these related, in percentage terms, to the DLO-DSOs income:

Year	*Local Authority*	*Deficit £*	*Percentage (related to income)*
Water and sewerage			
1990–1991	Central RC	–3,332	–3.6
1993–1994	Orkney IC	–6,000	–3.4
1993–1994	Grampian RC	–137,000	–8.2
Roads			
Nil			
New construction under £50,000			
1990–1991	Central RC	–32,574	–8.2
New construction over £50,000			
1991–1992	Orkney IC	–16,000	–21.1
1992–1993	Fife RC	–358,000	–50.9
1993–1994	Orkney IC	–22,000	–6.7
Building maintenance			
1990–1991	Argyll and Bute DC	–81,000	–8.3
1990–1991	Clydesdale DC	–37,555	–3.1
1990–1991	Dumfries and Galloway RC	–50,075	–33.5
1990–1991	Hamilton DC	–770,649	–11.0
1990–1991	Kirkcaldy DC	–234,472	–3.5
1990–1991	Orkney IC	–47,000	–2.9
1991–1992	Bearsden and Milngavie DC	–17,095	4.7
1991–1992	Edinburgh DC	–708,635	–7.7
1991–1992	North East Fife DC	–176,000	–14.4
1991–1992	Kirkcaldy DC	–563,702	–8.5
1991–1992	Nithsdale DC	–21,364	–1.1
1991–1992	Dumfries and Galloway RC	–102,137	–64.1
1991–1992	Dumbarton DC	–119,072	–3.6
1992–1993	Edinburgh DC	–448,750	–5.5
1992–1993	Skye and Lochalsh DC	–45,022	–49.0
1993–1994	Dumfries and Galloway RC	–32.795	–28.7
1993–1994	Stirling DC	–74,100	–1.3

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland out of the total number of accounts recorded, how many and what proportion of, local authority direct labour-services organisations in Scotland, operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government Act 1988, have achieved the required rate of return for the financial years 1992–93 and 1993–94. [26709]

Mr. Lang: In 1992–93, 258 DLOs/DSOs, in an individual service area, met the prescribed financial objective. This represented 94.9 per cent. of the total returns received. In 1993–94, 267 met the prescribed financial objective: this represented 96.7 per cent. of the total returns received. The figures for both years include a small number of returns from new town development corporations.

Surcharges

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many councillors in Scotland have been surcharged or prosecuted as a consequence of taking decisions in relation to the Local Government Act 1988. [26713]

Mr. Lang: No councillors in Scotland have been surcharged as a consequence of taking decisions in relation to the Local Government Act 1988. Figures on prosecutions are unavailable but I am not aware of any that have taken place.

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many councillors in Scotland have been surcharged or prosecuted as a consequence of taking decisions in relation to the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980. [26712]

Mr. Lang: No councillors in Scotland have been surcharged as a consequence of taking decisions in relation to the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980. Figures on prosecutions are unavailable but I am not aware of any that have taken place.

Client-contractor Splits

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by service area the local authorities in Scotland that have been challenged by his Department under regulation issued under section 9 of the Local Government Act 1992 in relation to their internal arrangements for establishing client-contractor splits. [26714]

Mr. Lang: My Department has not taken statutory action against any authority in relation to their internal arrangements for establishing client-contractor splits.

Wigtown Housing Association

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has about the registered offices of Wigtown housing association. [26684]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information is currently available about the Wigtown housing association's aims and objectives, standard terms and conditions for tenants—which includes details of the rights of tenants following transfer—and the intended composition of the board of management; names of 11 out of 16 members are known. All this information has been provided to tenants in the district's formal consultation on the transfer of council housing to the Wigtown housing association. The Department does not have any additional information about the association's offices.

Job Losses

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by authority and service area the number of full-time equivalent job losses experienced by local authority direct labour-services organisations in Scotland operating contracts under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980 for the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94. [26715]

Mr. Lang: My Department does not hold this information.

Departmental Complaints

Mr. George Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many complaints his Department received in the financial years 1990–91, 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993– 94 alleging anti-competitive behaviour by local authorities in Scotland under the terms of the Local Government (Planning and Land) Act 1980; and, as a result, how many local authorities were subsequently issued with a section 19a notice or 19b direction. [26710]

Mr. Lang: In 1990–91, we received two complaints of anti-competitive behaviour under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980; neither of these cases resulted in statutory action. In 1991–92, we received six complaints: a notice was served in relation to one of these. In 1992–93, we received four complaints: two of these resulted in a notice and one in a direction. In 1993–94, we received three complaints: these have resulted in two notices being issued.

AIDS (Prisons)

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, which prisons currently operate viral infectivity restrictions for prisoners with HIV/AIDS; and what proportion this figure represents of the total number of prison establishments in Scotland. [26955]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Archy Kirkwood, dated 6 June 1995.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your question about which prisons currently operate viral infectivity restrictions for prisoners with HIV/AIDS and what proportion this figure represents of the total number of prison establishments in Scotland.

The answer is none: the policy in Scotland has always been not to segregate HIV positive prisoners.

Crofts

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many whole crofts have been bought, by convenient geographical area, under the terms of the Crofting Reform Act (Scotland) in each year since 1976. [27249]

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is set out in the table. Figures are not available for the years 1976, 1977 and 1978.

Year	*Number of whole crofts purchased*
1979	216
1980	260
1981	308
1982	199
1983	176
1984	173
1985	149
1986	178
1987	104
1988	91
1989	96
1990	66
1991	139
1992	121
1993	150
1994	122

Companies

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those companies in which the holder of his office is a majority shareholder which *(a)* are currently in existence and *(b)* have been wound up in the past five years. [25709]

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 22 May 1995]:* The information is as follows:

Companies currently in existence

Caledonian MacBrayne Ltd.

David MacBrayne Ltd.

Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd.

Scottish Electricity Ltd.[1]

Scottish Electricity (No. 1) Ltd.[1]

Scottish Electricity (No. 2) Ltd.[1]

Scottish Nuclear Ltd.

The Student Loan Company Ltd.[2]

Companies wound up in the past five years

None.

[1] Formed as part of the electricity privatisation process to handle monetary transactions.

[2] Wholly owned by the Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Procurator Fiscal Service

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will describe the structure of the Procurator Fiscal Service in *(a)* Scotland, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Paisley; if he will list the names and posts of the Paisley procurator fiscal's office to third-tier level or below; and how long each named member of staff has been employed in that office. [24059]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 May 1995]:* The structure of the Procurator Fiscal Service is described in the 1991 to 1994 annual reports of the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. At the time of publication copies of the reports were sent to all Members of Parliament for Scottish constituencies, and copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

My noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate will write to the hon. Member with the other information requested.

Waverley Court, Paisley

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the amount of revenue from rents lost to Scottish Homes since Waverley court in Paisley was emptied of tenants; how this has been calculated; how much was spent by Scottish Homes on reports, development briefs, consultancies and other outgoings; what plans Scottish Homes has for the building; if he intends to take disciplinary action against any member of the board or management team of Scottish Homes for negligence or incompetence; and if he will make a statement. [24102]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 May 1995]:* The information requested is a matter for Scottish Homes and I have asked its chairman, Sir James Mellon to write to the hon. Member.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 7 June 1995

HOME DEPARTMENT

Body Armour

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what funding he will make available to chief constables to ensure that all police officers are issued with bullet-proof or knife-proof vests. [26274]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* No specific provision is being made available for this purpose, but total funds for the police service increased by 4 per cent. in 1995–96 to £6.4 billion. It is for chief officers to decide when and how to equip police officers with body armour, reflecting local priorities.

Fine Defaulters

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons over the past two years who were held in police custody had warrants separately issued for their arrest in respect of non-payment at the time they were discharged from custody; and if he will make a statement. [26028]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* The information requested is not collected centrally.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department for what reasons the names of those persons for whom there is a warrant for non-payment of fines are not included on the police national computer; and if he will make a statement. [26029]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Most warrants for non-payment of fines are executed locally, and the police often take the view that no useful purpose would be served by recording them on the police national computer. I understand that police forces enter the names of such persons on the police national computer where they consider that making the information available to other forces would be worth while, bearing in mind that the defaulter could not be arrested by any officer not in possession of the warrant itself.

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what means custody officers in police stations have to establish whether persons whom they detain or release have warrants against them for non-payment of fines; and if he will make a statement. [26030]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* All warrants issued by the courts and forwarded to the police are recorded on the force warrants register. In the case of warrants on which initial inquiries have been made without success, entries are made on the police national computer. For all persons coming into police custody, both sources of information are checked.

Female Prisoners

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many women prisoners are currently being held *(a)* three to a one-person cell and *(b)* two to a one-person cell; and what were the figures for each of the last 10 years. [26095]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of female prisoners currently sharing two and three to a cell and the figures for each of the last ten years.

At the end of May there were 48 female prisoners in England and Wales sharing two to a cell designed for one. There were no female prisoners sharing three to a cell designed for one.

Information for previous years is only available from centrally held records from 1992 onwards and is given in the table below:

Number of female prisoners sharing two and three to a cell at end of May 1992—May 1994

	Number of female prisoners sharing two to a cell	*Number of female prisoners sharing three to a cell*
May 1992	82	—
May 1993	22	—
May 1994	24	—

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many incidents of self-mutilation occurred in women's prisons in each of the last 10 years. [26097]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of incidents of self-mutilation in women's prisons in each of the last 10 years.

Incidents of self-mutilation which occur within Prison Service establishments are not recorded centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. Records are, however, kept of the number of incidents of deliberate self-harm each year, within which the number of deliberate self-mutilations will be contained.

A breakdown of incidents of deliberate self-harm by sex is available only from 1992–93 onwards. These figures are reproduced in the attached table.

Number of deliberate self-harm incidents among female inmates

Year	*Number of incidents of deliberate self harm*
1992–93	1,114
1993–94	1,113
1994–95	1,213

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many female prisoners in England and Wales are currently serving sentence for drug offences, by nationality of each prisoner. [26886]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many female prisoners in England and Wales are currently serving sentence for drug offences, by nationality of each prisoner.

The most recent provisional information for 28 February 1995 is given in the attached table.

Female sentenced population in England and Wales on 28 February 1995; drugs offences, by nationality

	Number
Barbados	2
Brazil	1
Canada	1
Columbia	4
Cyprus	1
Germany	1
Grenada	1
Ghana	14
Guam	1
Guyana	13
Hungary	1
Irish Republic	3
Jamaica	31
Kenya	1
Liberia	1
Nigeria	35
Netherlands	5
Pakistan	5
Poland	1
South Africa	1
Spain	1
Turkey	1
Trinidad and Tobago	1
Tanzania	1
United Kingdom	193
USA	8
Venezuela	1
Zambia	1
Total	330

Ms Janet Anderson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state by category of crime, the type of crime committed by each of the female prisoners in custody as at 9 May and the length of sentence in each case. [25963]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Ms Janet Anderson, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking if he will state by category of crime, the type of crime committed by each of the female prisoners in custody as at 9 May and the length of sentence in each case.

The most recent provisional information for 28 February 1995 is given in the attached table.

Female sentenced population in prison service establishments in England and Wales on 28 February 1995, by offence group, offence, and length of sentence (excluding fine defaulters)

	All sentence lengths	Up to and including 3 months	Over 3 months up to and including 6 months	Over 6 months up to and including 12 months	Over 12 months up to and including 18 months	Over 18 months up to and including 3 years	Over 3 years up to and including 4 years	Over 4 years up to and including 5 years	Over 5 years Over and including 10 years	Over 10 years and less than life	Life
Violence against the person:	268	12	18	17	17	36	15	22	26	5	100
Sexual offences:	11	1	1	1	0	3	1	1	3	—	—
Burglary:	51	1	5	17	8	11	5	2	2	—	—
Robbery:	93	1	3	8	11	36	16	8	10	—	—
Theft and handling:	251	44	59	77	33	35	2	—	1	—	—
Fraud and forgery:	92	9	15	20	11	24	12	1	—	—	—
Drug offences:	330	1	6	19	21	59	46	50	109	19	—
Other offences:	124	16	18	8	9	24	16	12	15	1	5
Offence not recorded:	163	9	21	30	17	51	14	6	13	1	1
Total of all immediate custodial offences	1383	94	146	198	127	279	125	102	178	26	106

Manslaughter Detainees

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the average length of time for patients with hospital orders for manslaughter between the restriction order being imposed and any kind of leave of absence, including supervised shopping trips; [26096]

(2) pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *554*, on restricted patients with a hospital order sentenced for manslaughter, for each year and each category, what was the average length of term between the patients' first supervised visit outside and their ultimate release; [26152]

(3) on restricted patients with a hospital order sentenced for manslaughter, how many of those patients in each category in each year have taken part in supervised outside visits; [26154]

(4) on restricted patients with a conviction for manslaughter for each year listed what was the shortest length of time between the restriction order being imposed and any kind of leave of absence, including supervised shopping trips. [26155]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* This information is not available.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report* column *554*, on restricted patients with a hospital order sentenced for manslaughter, how many of the patients in each year in each category have committed further offences since being released; and if he will give details of the offences. [26151]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Of the 84 restricted patients with a hospital order who were sentenced for manslaughter and discharged between 1985 and 1994, two are known to have been subsequently convicted of a standard list [1]offence before the end of 1993. One patient was sentenced for manslaughter in 1987, the other in 1989. The subsequent offences were theft from shops and burglary in a building other than a dwelling.

[1]All indictable—including triable either way—plus some summary.

Prisoners

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently held *(a)* three to a one-person cell and *(b)* two to a one person cell; and what these figures were for each of the past 10 years. [26150]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners currently sharing two and three to a cell and the figures for each of the last ten years.

At the end of May 1995 there were 8,362 prisoners in England and Wales sharing two to a cell designed for one. There were no prisoners sharing three to a cell designed for one.

Information for previous years is only available from 1987 and is given in the attached table.

Number of prisoners sharing two and three to a cell, 1987–94

	Number of prisoners sharing two to a cell	*Number of prisoners sharing three to a cell*
May 1987	13,634	4,878
May 1988	12,230	4,893
May 1989	12,156	4,446
May 1990	10,100	3,261
May 1991	10,686	2,007
May 1992	9,392	1,038
May 1993	7,412	126
May 1994	8,106	—

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners are currently held in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* London; and how many of them are in each security category. [26156]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of prisoners currently held in *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* London; and how many of them are in each security category.

The information requested is given in the attached tables.

1. Number of prisoners held in England and Wales and London on 26 May 1995

England and Wales		*Greater London*		
Prison service establishments	*Police cells*	*Prison service establishments*	*Police cells*	*Total*
44,564	126	6,238	—	50,928

2. Number of Prisoners Held in England and Wales and London (Greater London) on 26 May 1995

Security Category	*England and Wales*	*Greater London*	*Totals*
Category A	655	91	746
Category B	6,464	379	6,843
Category C	15,428	1,342	16,770
Category D	3,694	250	3,944
Uncategorised or Awaiting Categorisation	18,449	4,176	22,625

1. Female prisoners and young offenders are given only a security category when category A is applicable.
2. Unless category A is applicable, adult male prisoners are not given a security category until after conviction and sentence.
3. Greater London comprises the London boroughs and the City of London.

Probation Service

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the budget for each probation service in England and Wales for 1994–95 and 1995–96 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* comparable terms; and if he will identify the budget difference in (i) cash and (ii) percentage terms between those years for each probation service. [26878]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The information is given in the table:

Probation service	*1994–95 budget (cash terms) (£)*	*1995–96 budget (cash terms)*[1] *(£)*	*1995–96 budget (real terms)*[2] *(£)*	*Change from 1994–95 to 1995–96 in cash terms (£)*	*Change from 1994–95 to 1995–96 in percentage terms*
Avon	6,363,247	6,391,504	6,190,319	28,257	0.4
Bedfordshire	3,561,153	3,520,072	3,409,271	(41,081)	–1.2
Berkshire	5,598,357	5,537,701	5,363,391	(60,656)	–1.1
Buckinghamshire	4,123,056	4,032,524	3,905,592	(90,532)	–2.2
Cambridgeshire	3,985,020	3,957,128	3,832,569	(27,892)	–0.7
Cheshire	5,814,495	5,817,204	5,634,096	2,709	0

Probation service	1994–95 budget (cash terms) (£)	1995–96 budget (cash terms)[1] (£)	1995–96 budget (real terms)[2] (£)	Change from 1994–95 to 1995–96 in cash terms (£)	Change from 1994–95 to 1995–96 in percentage terms
Cleveland	4,827,165	4,823,077	4,671,261	(4,088)	–0.1
Cornwall	2,498,062	2,534,760	2,454,973	36,698	1.5
Cumbria	4,024,646	3,969,364	3,844,420	(55,282)	–1.4
Derbyshire	4,995,971	4,973,854	4,817,292	(22,117)	–0.4
Devon	7,164,724	7,019,289	6,798,343	(145,435)	–2
Dorset	4,303,024	4,234,358	4,101,073	(68,666)	–1.6
Durham	4,258,812	4,194,821	4,062,781	(63,991)	–1.5
Essex	8,787,508	8,670,720	8,397,792	(116,788)	–1.3
Gloucestershire	3,757,233	3,731,342	3,613,891	(25,891)	–0.7
Hampshire	9,064,455	8,982,941	8,700,185	(81,514)	–0.9
Hereford and Worcester	4,314,230	4,217,601	4,084,844	(96,629)	–1.7
Hertfordshire	5,713,026	5,582,714	5,406,987	(130,312)	–2.3
Humberside	6,113,919	6,054,183	5,863,615	(59,736)	–1
Kent	9,580,095	9,571,436	9,270,156	(8,659)	–0.1
Lancashire	8,817,083	8,758,995	8,483,288	(58,088)	–0.7
Leicestershire	5,369,795	5,325,131	5,157,512	(44,664)	–0.8
Lincolnshire	3,826,514	3,786,164	3,666,987	(40,350)	–1.1
Greater Manchester	23,570,470	23,455,063	22,716,768	(115,407)	–0.5
Merseyside	15,295,192	15,082,112	14,607,372	(213,080)	–1.4
Norfolk	4,079,001	4,046,821	3,919,439	(32,180)	–0.8
Northamptonshire	3,315,744	3,335,463	3,230,473	19,719	0.6
Northumbria	11,854,200	11,741,910	11,372,310	(112,290)	–0.9
Nottinghamshire	8,564,573	8,428,929	8,163,612	(135,644)	–1.6
Oxfordshire	3,527,945	3,457,918	3,349,073	(70,027)	–2
Shropshire	2,487,777	2,451,574	2,374,406	(36,203)	–1.5
Somerset	3,992,139	3,893,500	3,770,944	(98,639)	–2.5
Staffordshire	7,289,697	7,152,056	6,926,931	(137,641)	–1.9
Suffolk	3,585,647	3,561,455	3,449,351	(24,192)	–0.7
Surrey	5,567,848	5,517,022	5,343,363	(50,826)	–0.9
East Sussex	4,133,220	4,129,636	3,999,647	(3,584)	–0.1
West Sussex	3,199,562	3,190,990	3,090,547	(8,572)	–0.3
Warwickshire	3,352,241	3,310,034	3,205,844	(42,207)	–1.3
West Midlands	24,675,442	24,505,679	23,734,314	(169,763)	–0.7
Wiltshire	3,271,815	3,259,977	3,157,363	(11,838)	0.4
North Yorkshire	3,181,142	3,247,283	3,145,068	66,141	2.1
South Yorkshire	12,011,042	11,775,791	11,405,124	(235,251)	–2
West Yorkshire	18,846,175	18,662,490	18,075,051	(183,685)	–1
Inner London	37,333,414	36,696,501	35,541,405	(636,913)	–1.7
North East London	8,965,634	8,914,046	8,633,459	(51,588)	–0.6
South East London	5,915,413	5,878,271	5,693,241	(37,142)	–0.6
South West London	4,542,530	4,517,551	4,375,352	(24,979)	–0.5
Middlesex	16,320,936	16,126,480	15,618,867	(194,456)	–1.2
Dyfed	2,051,959	2,049,153	1,984,652	(2,806)	–0.1
Gwent	2,623,790	2,626,928	2,544,240	3,138	0.1
North Wales	3,454,566	3,453,344	3,344,643	(1,222)	0
Powys	786,562	768,276	744,093	(18,286)	–2.3
South Glamorgan	3,797,786	3,773,319	3,654,546	24,467	0.6
Mid Glamorgan	3,997,396	3,986,142	3,860,670	11,254	0.3
West Glamorgan	3,228,344	3,198,479	3,097,800	29,865	0.9

[1] Figures are in terms of 100 per cent. grant implied by the cash limit and exclude additional funding devolved in 1995–96 to support partnership grants.
[2] Using the GDP deflator with 1994–95 as the base year.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what responses he has received to the review of probation officer recruitment and qualifying training discussion paper issued by his Department; and how many respondents broadly favour the document's proposals and how many broadly oppose them. [26207]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: We expect to give an account of the nature and balance of the overall response in due course.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proposals he has for changes to the 1995–96 cash and running costs limits within his responsibilities. [27441]

Mr. Howard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class VIII, vote 1—Home Office administration, police, probation and other services, England and Wales—will be reduced by £1,799,000 from £4,438,456,000 to £4,436,657,000. This will enable the transfer of £1,694,000 to the Lord Chancellor's Department in respect of the transfer of responsibility for marriage guidance and a running costs transfer of £105,000 to the Privy Council Office in respect of the Home Office contribution to the central drugs co-ordination unit.

In consequence of these changes the Home Office gross running costs limit will be reduced by £105,000 from £1,740,436,000 to £1,740,331,000.

Juvenile Offenders

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many juveniles aged 10 to 16 years were convicted in *(a)* Lancashire and *(b)* the north-west for each year since 1992 for each offence. [26727]

Mr. Maclean: The information as requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, the table shows, in less detail, the number of offenders aged 10 to 16 convicted by type of offence group for the years 1992 and 1993: 1994 data will not be available until the autumn 1995.

Number of persons aged 10–16 years convicted at all courts for all offences by area and type of offence 1992, 1993

Type of offence	Lancashire [1]		North-west [2]		England and Wales	
	1992	1993	1992	1993	1992	1993
Indictable offences						
Violence against the person	72	74	559	576	3,072	3,152
Sexual offences	4	9	57	42	246	261
Burglary	196	178	974	868	5,449	5,207
Robbery	22	16	184	222	931	1,082
Theft and handling stolen goods	272	225	1,577	1,548	7,936	8,361
Fraud and forgery	9	6	47	35	199	167
Criminal damage	19	28	90	143	954	1,121
Drug offences	7	6	94	69	334	266
Other (excluding motoring)	24	23	322	281	1,037	1,130
Motoring	2	4	43	20	270	132
Total indictable	627	569	3,947	3,804	20,428	20,879
Summary non-motoring	204	200	1,373	1,331	6,673	6,057
Summary motoring	55	58	294	362	1,905	2,324
All offences	886	827	5,614	5,497	29,006	29,260

[1] Lancashire police force area.
[2] North-west region = Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and Cheshire police force areas.

Nigerian Prisoners

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners originally emanating from Nigeria and sentenced for drug offences have been *(a)* paroled and *(b)* subsequently deported since 1 January 1994. [26887]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question asking how many prisoners originally emanating from Nigeria and sentenced for drug offences have been paroled and subsequently deported since 1 January 1994.

Since 1 January 1994, forty two prisoners of Nigerian nationality sentenced to imprisonment for drug offences have been granted parole. Forty of these prisoners were subsequently deported.

Convicted Killers

Dr. Spink: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people have died since 1965 at the hands of previously convicted killers. [27139]

Mr. Maclean: During the period 1965 to date, a total of 72 persons in England and Wales are known to have been killed by persons who had previously been convicted of homicide.

Prison Service Procedures

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what are the procedures the Prison Service must follow in order to provide information to the police when serious offenders under long-term imprisonment escape. [27160]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Mike O'Brien, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about what procedures the Prison Service must follow in order to provide information to the police when serious offenders under long term imprisonment escape.

Every prison establishment is required to hold a set of contingency plans to be followed in the event of an incident. All escapes from establishments and from escort are specifically covered in these contingency plans.

These plans specify that the police must be informed immediately, normally by telephone., The prison is required to give the police details of the escape and the prisoners involved.

Details including a photograph are also sent to the Police Gazette for inclusion in that publication which goes to all police forces.

John Pritchard

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the governor of Sudbury open prison on the escape of John Pritchard and the speed with which a photograph and other identification information was passed to the police; and if he will make a statement on the circumstances of the escape of John Pritchard from the custody of Her Majesty's Prison Service. [27159]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter have been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Mike O'Brien, dated 7 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the abscond of John Pritchard from Sudbury open prison and the speed with which a photograph and other identification information was passed to the police.

Mr. Pritchard was sentenced to life imprisonment for murder in 1979 and had been at Foston Hall, a satellite wing of Sudbury open prison, since September 1993 where he had behaved well.

On 9 May 1995 Mr. Pritchard was missing from the routine lunchtime roll check and could not be found on the subsequent search of the building and grounds. Derbyshire police headquarters at Ripley was informed at 2.15 pm and a constable from the local police station collected photographs and personal details of Mr. Pritchard from Sudbury at 4 pm.

Mr. Pritchard remains unlawfully at large.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current size of each index of the police national computer, indicating the minimum and maximum size of each index over the last year. [26438]

Mr. Maclean: The numbers of records on each of the five databases on the police national computer, on 26 May 1995, are given in the table. The maximum and minimum numbers of records over time are not recorded.

	Number
Vehicles	41,396,172
Stolen property	58,888
Phoenix[1] (convictions, disqualified drivers and wanted and missing persons)	5,314,544
Fingerprints	4,275,907
Crime Pattern Analysis	5,438

[1]Phoenix—the Criminal Justice Record Service—replaced the names database on 22 May 1995.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current size of each category found in the *(a)* stolen and suspect vehicle index and *(b)* wanted and missing person's index of the police national computer, indicating the minimum and maximum size of each category in the index over the year. [26439]

Mr. Maclean: On 26 May 1995, 458,264 vehicles were listed as lost or stolen and details on 44,486 suspect vehicles were recorded. The number of persons listed as wanted or missing was 138,585, but separate figures for the wanted and missing categories are not available. The maximum and minimum numbers of records over time are not recorded.

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has on the number of accesses made to the police national computer by each constabulary over the last year; and what was the proportion of access requests made to the vehicle indexes of the police national computer. [26447]

Mr. Maclean: The number of transactions undertaken on the police national computer by each police force in England and Wales during the 12 months to 30 April 1995, together with the proportion of requests made to the vehicle database, is given in the table.

Police force	*Number of transactions undertaken*	*Proportion of transactions undertaken on vehicles database (per cent.)*
Avon and Somerset	1,229,763	63.0
Bedfordshire	481,728	64.4
Cambridgeshire	453,788	68.2
Cheshire	607,382	56.5
City of London	252,288	52.5
Cleveland	436,483	51.0
Cumbria	445,759	59.2
Derbyshire	649,086	63.0
Devon and Cornwall	874,883	62.8
Dorset	617,375	55.8
Durham	514,522	52.1
Dyfed Powys	371,754	48.1
Essex	983,911	54.2
Gloucestershire	429,875	62.4
Greater Manchester	2,492,681	61.6
Gwent	261,464	53.7
Hampshire	1,176,623	49.5
Hertfordshire	459,694	58.5
Humberside	597,371	61.7
Kent	1,369,684	57.6
Lancashire	1,456,465	55.8
Leicestershire	476,043	60.8
Lincolnshire	410,139	54.5
Merseyside	933,015	46.7
Metropolitan	7,838,669	52.2
Norfolk	481,910	48.4
North Wales	571,182	52.7
North Yorkshire	591,548	62.2
Northamptonshire	536,941	58.1
Northumbria	1,383,422	68.0
Nottinghamshire	746,837	61.2
South Wales	990,282	60.7
South Yorkshire	921,304	77.6
Staffordshire	620,090	60.3
Suffolk	410,070	65.7
Surrey	490,422	62.9
Sussex	955,518	50.4
Thames Valley	1,427,094	58.6
Warwickshire	372,211	67.2
West Mercia	760,449	57.4
West Midlands	2,455,107	55.2
West Yorkshire	1,609,052	56.5
Wiltshire	345,455	59.1

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many accesses were made to each index of the police national computer over the last year indicating the number of access requests that involved searching more than one index. [26437]

Mr. Maclean: Data on the police national computer are stored on five databases. The number of transactions, which may involve additional or retrieval of information, undertaken on each database by police forces in England and Wales in the 12 months to 30 April 1995 is given in the table. It is not possible to determine whether transactions undertaken on separate databases are linked, with the exception of those undertaken on both the fingerprint and names databases. There were 798,853 transactions which involved the use of both these databases.

	Number
Vehicles	23,976,834
Stolen property	291,118
Names[1] (convictions, disqualified drivers and wanted and missing persons)	17,360,326
Fingerprints	945,309
Crime pattern analysis	338,005

[1] The names databases was replaced by Phoenix—the Criminal Justice Record Service—on 22 May 1995.

Neighbourhood Watch Schemes

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are members of neighbourhood watch schemes; and what are his estimates of the impact of this scheme on crime. [25208]

Mr. Maclean: At the latest count, there were over 130,000 neighbourhood watch schemes in England and Wales covering over 5 million households. The recent police research group report—"Policing and Neighbourhood Watch: Strategic issues"—has confirmed that crime and the fear of crime can be reduced in communities by setting up a neighbourhood watch group. The research also shows that belonging to a group has the added benefits of maintaining public confidence and good police-public relations; safeguarding against vigilantism; and reinforcing community spirit.

In addition, many police forces I have visited have confirmed that neighbourhood watch schemes have played an important part in the fight against crime.

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what considerations are being given by him to charging fees to members of neighbourhood watch schemes; and if he will make a statement. [25209]

Mr. Maclean: There is no question whatsoever of charging of fees of any sort to neighbourhood watch members. The Government are keen to expand neighbourhood watch and encourage more members and will not contemplate measures which would be a disincentive.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Departmental Budget

Mr. Coe: To ask the Attorney-General what plans he has to amend cash limits and/or gross running costs limits within his Department. [27645]

The Attorney-General: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class IX, vote 6, Treasury Solicitor's Department will be reduced by £250,000 from £7,244,000 to £6,994,000.

The gross running costs limit for the Treasury Solicitor's Department will be increased by £1,000,000 from £20,258,000 to £21,258,000 to reflect extended use of the Treaury Solicitor's Department legal services by other Government Departments. The increased work load will generate additional receipts which will more than offset the increase in running costs expenditure.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Departmental Budget

Mr. Booth: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what changes he plans to the 1995–96 cash limits for the Lord Chancellor's Department, class IX, vote 1. [27442]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate, the cash limit for class IX, vote 1 will be increased by £1,694,000 from £781,320,000 to £783,014,000. The increase, which relates to funding for marriage guidance, will be offset by a transfer from the Home Office class VIII, vote 1 and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

PRIME MINISTER

Annual General Meetings

Dr. Spink: To ask the Prime Minister what action he plans to take to prevent pay resolutions submitted by shareholders at company annual general meetings being treated at votes of confidence in the board of directors. [27323]

The Prime Minister: It is for the board to decide how it wishes to respond to any resolution which is submitted by shareholders to the company's annual general meeting. It is not for Government to determine the stance which either the directors or shareholders should adopt.

Executive Pay

Dr. Spink: To ask the Prime Minister what action he plans to take to empower and encourage institutional shareholders to control directors' pay, and particularly in respect of the utilities. [27324]

The Prime Minister: The Government believe that institutional investors should take an active interest in the management of companies in which they invest, including matters such as executive remuneration. The terms of reference of the Greenbury committee, which is examining the structure within which executive pay is determined and disclosed, include consideration of the role of shareholders. I look forward to seeing the committee's recommendations.

Lowe Bell Communications

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister what contracts have been awarded to Lowe Bell Communications since D day PR contract in 1994. [26972]

The Prime Minister: Lowe Bell Communications has been awarded no further contracts relating to the world war two commemorations since the D day contract. As for other contracts, this information is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Written Questions

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will start discussions on the possibility of introducing the principle of written parliamentary questions being answered during parliamentary recess.

Mr. Newton: I have no plans to do so, but the hon. Gentleman may wish to ask the Procedure Committee to consider his suggestion.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

National Lottery

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chairman of the Administration Committee when he expects a national lottery outlet in the House to be operational.

Mr. Michael J. Martin: At its meeting on 28 February, the Administration Committee considered a request from Camelot Group plc for permission to install a lottery terminal within the precincts of the House. The principle which guides the Committee in its consideration of requests of this kind is that any proposed service must be of direct relevance in assisting Members to carry out their parliamentary duties. It was felt that a lottery terminal did not meet this criterion.

HEALTH

Nolan Committee

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the recommendations of the first report of the committee on standards in public life concerning NHS bodies. [25936]

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the Nolan committee recommendations for *(a)* appointment to national health service boards and *(b)* as rewards whistleblowing. [26310]

Mr. Malone: I broadly welcome the recommendations made by the committee on standards in public life on issues relating to national health service bodies. The Government will be considering in detail all the recommendations addressed to the Government and will be responding before the summer recess to those singled out by the committee for early implementation.

NHS Sight Tests and Dental Examinations

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what would be the cost to the NHS of restoring the right to *(a)* a free eye test and *(b)* a free dental check-up. [26567]

Mr. Malone: On the basis that the trend in the number of sight tests apparent before the announcement of changes in November 1987 continued, and with the sight test fees remaining at the 1994–95 level, the cost of restoring free sight tests is estimated to be in the order of £110 million.

Based on the prices and charges applying in 1994–95 and assuming that the removal of the charge led to no increase in the number of dental examinations, the annual cost of abolishing charges for dental examinations is estimated to be in the order of £60 million.

EU Health Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what matters were discussed and what matters decided at the EU Health Council on 2 June; and what matters were voted upon. [26696]

Mr. Malone: The Health Council on 2 June agreed common positions on three proposals from the European Commission for Community actions in the field of public health which covered: combating cancer; health promotion, information, education and training; and prevention of AIDS and other communicable diseases. Political agreement was reached on a fourth proposal for a programme combating drug dependence, on which the opinion of the European Parliament is still awaited. The Council agreed conclusions on the Commission's European Union action plan to combat drugs—1995 to 1999—agreed to a resolution on blood safety and self-sufficiency in the European Community, and discussed but drew no conclusions on a memorandum from the French presidency on orphan medicines. Orphan medicines are used to treat orphan diseases which are extremely rare diseases with very low numbers of sufferers. The matters on which decisions were taken were agreed by all member states, with no abstentions or votes against.

Children's Services

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she intends to take to raise the profile of children's services plans. [27567]

Mr. Bowis: I propose to make an order under section 17(4) of the Children Act 1989 to impose a specific duty on local authorities to produce and publish children's services plans.

Authorities will be expected to use their powers under section 27 of the Children Act to request local education and health authorities to collaborate with them in the planning process for such plans.

Copies of the consultation letter and draft circular will be placed in the Library.

Children Act 1989 Report

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the third report to Parliament on the Children Act 1989 will be published; and if she will make a statement. [27568]

Mr. Bowis: I have, today, placed in the Library the third report to Parliament on the operation of the Children Act in England and Wales.

The report shows that local authorities are placing more emphasis on supporting children within their own families, as well as placing a greater proportion of children they look after in foster families and improving the quality of residential care.

GP Practices (Attacks)

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on the number of attacks on staff, patients and property in GP practices. [26740]

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally.

NHS Drugs

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the operational definition of the net ingredient cost of drugs for the NHS; and if she will make a statement. [27131]

Mr. Malone: "Net ingredient cost" is a term applied to drugs dispensed within the family health services in England and Wales. It refers to the cost of drugs before discounts available to dispensers, container allowances and value added tax, if appropriate, are taken into account. It does not include any dispensing costs or fees.

Brentwood Blood Transfusion Centre

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what changes have taken place in the operation of Brentwood blood transfusion centre within the last six months; and if she will make a statement. [27174]

Mr. Sackville: The operation of the blood transfusion service is a matter for the National Blood Authority.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the total capital expenditure on the Brentwood blood transfusion centre in each year for the last five years for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement. [27175]

Mr. Sackville: The information is not available centrally. The hon. and learned Member may wish to contact Sir Colin Walker, chairman of the National Blood Authority, for information from 1 April 1994.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) where the administration and distribution of blood and blood products to the south-east of England will be based after the proposed closure of the Brentwood blood transfusion centre; [27176]

(2) if she will make a statement on the future organisation of the national blood service. [27180]

Mr. Sackville: These are matters for the National Blood Authority. The authority has undertaken an extensive consultation and will produce revised proposals shortly.

Ambulance Services

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to introduce an accreditation system for privately owned ambulance services; and if she will make a statement. [27181]

Mr. Sackville: This Department has no plans to offer accreditation to private ambulance operators. A code of practice for private ambulance operators, issued by the national health service executive, EL(93)109, has already been circulated widely and copies are available in the Library.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary for Health if she will make a statement as to the rules governing the qualifications of staff employed as *(a)* ambulance technicians and *(b)* paramedics in private ambulance services. [27177]

Mr. Sackville: It is for private ambulance service operators and those contracting for their services to ensure that staff employed have qualifications appropriate for their duties.

Paramedics

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will restrict the use of the term "paramedic" to the specific holders of the national health service TD qualification; and if she will make a statement. [27182]

Mr. Sackville: Closure of title is a goal for paramedics themselves to pursue. I understand that the Ambulance Services Association has already initiated moves towards that end.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Micro-enterprise Development

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the progress within the Overseas Development Administration in respect of the funding of the Grameen trust; and when he expects a decision to be made on funding. [25878]

Mr. Baldry: I refer the right hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Ms Jackson) on 23 May, column *511*.

World Bank

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the Wapenhams report that incentives to World bank staff should reflect success in implementing the poverty reduction agenda rather than loan disbursement. [25629]

Mr. Baldry: The bank issued a report in September 1994 describing progress made in the implementation of "Portfolio management; next steps: a programme of actions". Copies of the report have been placed in the Libraries of the House. Measures taken include: revised job competencies with a strong focus on implementation; recruitment efforts to fill skills gaps, especially in the social sciences; introduction of a new project performance rating methodology, emphasising achievement of development objectives and work on performance indicators. Performance indicators on poverty reduction were among those completed last year.

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will make it his policy to ensure that the World bank's country poverty assessments are *(a)* prepared according to consistent, published criteria, *(b)* take account of non-income measures of wealth and *(c)* are used to inform country public expenditure reviews; [26527]

(2) if he will make it his policy to ensure that World bank country poverty assessment teams include *(a)* a balanced mix of economists, social scientists and other relevant professionals, *(b)* consultants recruited from the country concerned and *(c)* representatives of organisations of the poor in the country concerned. [26528]

Mr. Baldry: A working group on poverty reduction was set up under the framework of the bank-led special programme of assistance for sub-Saharan Africa. It made recommendations last autumn for improving the quality of poverty assessments and their linkage to such other work as public expenditure reviews and country assistance strategies. The United Kingdom has played an active role in this working group.

The recommendations highlighted the importance of carefully designed and professionally conducted participatory poverty assessment techniques by teams with the appropriate mix of skills; the need for local participation and collaboration; and a broader approach

towards measuring poverty, including non-income measures. Bank management is aiming to ensure that this best practice is reflected in future poverty assessment exercises.

Angola

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the requests to the Government for aid and assistance for demining in Angola in each of the last three years; and if he will make a statement. [26773]

Mr. Baldry: The first requests for assistance with humanitarian demining in Angola were received from British non-governmental organisations—Halo Trust and the Mines Advisory Group—in 1994. Pending conclusion of the Lusaka peace talks, we provided £482,243 for demining training, marking and surveying. Since then, we have provided £1,242,825 for expansion of their efforts in Bie, Huambo and Moxico provinces. We are encouraging the European Commission to help co-finance their activities. We are also supporting the UN's central mine action office in Luanda with two key posts—the mines training officer and operations room manager—plus related office support and equipment—£230,000.

East Timor

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations about East Timor were made by the Minister for Overseas Development during her recent visit to Indonesia; and what was the response of the Indonesian Government. [27014]

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development discussed a wide range of issues including human rights and the situation in East Timor during her visit to Indonesia.

EU Development Council

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what matters were discussed and what matters decided at the European Union Development Council meeting on 1 June; and what matters were voted upon. [26697]

Mr. Baldry: The Development Council decided on a political and technical dialogue with the Government of Rwanda, which will enable EC aid to be resumed. The Council agreed resolutions on complementarity, structural adjustment and regional integration, and a declaration providing guidelines for research. The Council also set priorities for EC aid to South Africa in 1995, and launched a joint evaluation of EC aid programmes to the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, the Mediterranean, and Asian and Latin America. There were exchanges of view on EC humanitarian aid, rehabilitation, migration and development, and the UN world conference on women.

No votes were taken.

Tropical Rain Forest, Cameroon

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Government of the Cameroon concerning the destruction of the tropical rain forest by logging companies. [25430]

Mr. Baldry: The conservation and sustainable management of tropical forests are the focus of our aid programme to Cameroon and also the subject of regular dialogue with the Government of Cameroon. We are helping implement new forestry laws aimed at controlling exploitation and giving wider management powers to rural communities.

DEFENCE

Compensation

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions his Department has been sued by a former member of the armed forces as a result of incidents involving the negligent discharge of weapons in each of the last five years. [25935]

Mr. Soames: Fifty-three compensation claims have been identified for injury resulting from the negligent discharge of weapons. Legal proceedings have been issued in 16 cases.

Military Equipment

Sir Nicholas Bonsor: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence for what military purpose three rough terrain wheeled tractors are required, as set out in tender No. EM and DIA/152; what consideration has been given to lease or contract hire of such equipment; and if he will make a statement. [26120]

Mr. Freeman: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave on 19 January 1995, *Official Report*, column *684*.

Princess Alexandra Hospital

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence whether the Princess Alexandra hospital in Swindon will be leased to the Princess Margaret hospital trust after the closure of the former in 1996. [26306]

Mr. Soames: Negotiations with the Swindon and Marlborough NHS trust on a possible use for the hospital have been progressing well, although a number of stages remain to be completed before a contract could be signed.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he has had with representatives of Pan European Airways with regard to proposals to fly calves from military airbases in conjunction with the National Farmers Union; and if he has to date authorised the use of such bases. [26733]

Mr. Soames: My Department has received no such approaches from Pan European Airways.

Dartmouth Royal Regatta

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *230*, on how many occasions since 1965 a guardship from his Department has not attended the Dartmouth royal regatta; if he will list the additional official duties during August 1995 which prevent the attendance of a guardship at the current regatta; and if he will review his decision. [27354]

Mr. Soames: The Royal Navy has on each occasion between 1965 and 1994 been able to provide a vessel to attend the Dartmouth royal regatta. While it is not our practice to reveal the detailed operational programme of the Royal Navy, the following official tasks are being undertaken by Her Majesty's ships during August:

Destroyers/Frigates—VJ commemorations—four vessels (visiting London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast)
Plymouth Navy Days—five vessels
Royal Yacht Escort—one vessel
Mine Counter-measure Vessels—VJ Day—one vessel (visiting Liverpool)
Navy days—one vessel

Coming on top of the very high levels of operational commitments affecting RN vessels at present, these tasks mean that, regrettably, there is no prospect of providing a ship to attend the 1995 Dartmouth royal regatta.

RAF Rissington

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the consultant's report on the future of RAF Rissington, Gloucestershire; and if he will make a statement. [27268]

Mr. Soames: It is not my Department's policy to publish such reports. In due course, a draft planning brief for the site will be released by the Cotswold district council for public consultation, and I understand that the hon. Member will be involved in that process.

Air Attacks (Sarajevo)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civilian buildings were hit and how many civilian casualties were incurred in the recent bomb and rocket attacks by American planes under NATO command in the Sarajevo area. [27209]

Mr. Soames: None of which we are aware.

Air Incident (West Cumbria)

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to establish the ownership of the equipment jettisoned by an aircraft in west Cumbria on 31 May and the circumstances in which it was jettisoned. [27304]

Mr. Soames: I can confirm that my Department is inquiring into the circumstances which led to the discovery of an undamaged aircraft fuel tank to establish whether it was lost by a military aircraft.

RAF Topcliffe

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost of implementing additional flying training to date at Royal Air Force Topcliffe; what is the estimated total cost when complete; and if he will make a statement. [27162]

Mr. Soames: As part of the Royal Air Force's flying training rationalisation programme, a change of task is being implemented at RAF Topcliffe. This change will not involve additional flying training at the station, but there has been and will be some relocation of units to and from the site. The estimated cost of the relocation of flying units to RAF Topcliffe is £460,000; the majority of these costs will be incurred in financial year 1995–96.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations his Department had with *(a)* local authorities, *(b)* local organisations and *(c)* residents prior to upgrading the additional flying hours and training aircraft at Royal Air Force Topcliffe; and if he will make a statement. [27166]

Mr. Soames: There has been no such consultation as no increase in flying hours or the number of training aircraft at RAF Topcliffe is planned as a result of the Royal Air Force's flying training rationalisation programme.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the increased number of *(a)* personnel, *(b)* aircraft by types and *(c)* flying hours when Royal Air Force Topcliffe has reached its additional training programme; and if he will make a statement. [27165]

Mr. Soames: No increase is planned in the number of my Department's personnel, aircraft or flying hours flown at RAF Topcliffe. Future flying training at RAF Topcliffe will, however, be conducted on the Tucano aircraft, whereas previous flying training carried out at the station utilised the Firefly aircraft.

Service Bases

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, Official Report, column *230*, if he will list all those Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Army bases which were sold to the highest bidder. [26275]

Mr. Soames: The information requested is not held centrally by my Department, and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Portland Naval Base

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what will be the estimated cost to his Department of undertaking *(a)* a structural survey of key buildings and breakwaters and *(b)* an environmental assessment of the Portland naval base on behalf of the purchaser, Portland Port Ltd.; when this work began; and if he will make a statement. [26277]

Mr. Soames: My Department has at present no intention of carrying out a structural survey of buildings and breakwaters at Portland naval base, nor do we intend to conduct an environmental assessment.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what undertakings have been given to Portland Port Ltd. in respect of new roads to the Dorchester bypass, and thence north to the M5, the midlands and south Wales; what will be the estimated cost to the Government of fulfilling these undertakings; when such roads may be complete; and if he will make a statement. [26278]

Mr. Soames: My Department has given no undertaking to Portland Port Ltd. in respect of new roads to the Dorchester bypass, and thence north to the M5, the midlands and south Wales. The question of any costs falling to my Department does not therefore arise.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence pursuant to his answer of 9 May, *Official Report*, column *404*, if he will list the meetings between officials of his Department and prospective bidders for the purchase of the Portland naval base; if he will name the lobbying companies which made representations on behalf of the bidders; and if he will make a statement. [26279]

Mr. Soames: Meetings between my officials and prospective bidders for the Portland naval base were held on 27 May, 15 July and 15 December 1994; and 4 January, 12 January, 14 February, 21 February, 22 February and 7 April 1995. No representations were made by lobbying companies on behalf of the bidders.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will place in the Library a copy of the Drivers Jonas report into the sale of Portland naval base. [26280]

Mr. Soames: The Drivers Jonas report on options for the reuse of the Portland naval base was commissioned in 1993 by Weymouth and Portland borough council. Requests for a copy of the report should therefore be made to the council.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the work being carried out by his Department at Portland naval base prior to the handover to Portland Port Ltd.; what is the cost of these works; and if he will make a statement. [26513]

Mr. Soames: Work at Portland naval base is limited to the maintenance work required to meet my Department's obligations until the property is relinquished on 31 March next year. In addition, work will be carried out to clear ordnance from the site in accordance with the usual policy for property in disposal. It is not yet possible to assess the cost of this work.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans his Department has to undertake the removal of a structure blocking the southern entrance to Portland naval base; if he will identify the nature and cause of that blockage; if he will estimate the cost of removing the structure; and if he will make a statement. [26514]

Mr. Soames: In 1914, the battleship HMS Hood was sunk as a blockship in the southern entrance to Portland harbour to provide protection against submarine and torpedo attack. The presence of the hulk, which is now totally submerged, markedly reduces the swell in the harbour which would otherwise be experienced during southerly winds. There are at present no plans to remove the hulk which does not restrict the use of, or access to, the harbour.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Lone Parents

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is the annual cost of benefits payable to single parents. [26411]

Mr. Burt: Total benefit expenditure on lone parents in 1994–95 is expected to be £9.1 billion.

Employment Categorisation

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many people, classified as self-employed by the Inland Revenue, are required by the Contributions Agency to be treated as employed for the purposes of national insurance contributions; and in what types of activity they are mainly engaged. [26389]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The Inland Revenue and the Contributions Agency are committed to a "common approach" in determining employment status. Under this arrangement, the conclusion reached by one Department about an individual's status after an investigation of all the facts will normally be accepted by the other.

It is not possible to estimate the number of people who are treated as self-employed by the Inland Revenue but as employees by the Contributions Agency for the purposes of national insurance contributions. There is a very limited number of groups of workers covered by particular statutory rules which may result in such different treatment.

Certain divers are assessable as self-employed persons for income tax purposes but pay national insurance contributions as employees. Additionally, the Social Security (Categorisation of Earners) Regulations provide that particular groups of workers should be treated as employees. In these cases it may mean occasionally that the national insurance treatment differs from the tax treatment. The following groups of workers are affected:

Agency workers;
Ministers of religion;
Office cleaners;
Part-time or visiting lecturers, teachers or instructors;
Persons employed by their spouse.

There is currently some difference in treatment involving workers in the entertainment industry which is under review.

National Insurance Numbers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will give an undertaking that the national insurance number will be used only with respect to taxation and social security benefits; and if he will make a statement. [26398]

Mr. Arbuthnot: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on Monday 30 January, *Official Report*, column *519*.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he expects to respond to the report into housing benefit published by the Social Security Advisory Committee; and if he will make a statement on its conclusions. [26653]

Mr. Roger Evans: I have received a copy of the report "Housing Benefit—The Review of Social Security", paper 3, which was published on 11 May and have noted the issues identified. The report does not call for a formal response, but I welcome the views of the committee in the context of the Government's proposals to improve work incentives and to target housing benefit more effectively—matters on which the committee has been consulted separately.

War Pensions

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many nuclear test participants are in receipt of war pensions. [26662]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Income Support

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will ensure that claimants without bank accounts receiving payments above the girocheque

encashment limit resulting from successful tribunal decisions receive such payments in a form which they can convert into cash; and if he will make a statement. [26741]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Yes.

Personal Pensions

Mr. Ingram: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the number of people paying contributions to a personal pension scheme in each year since 1988 under the categories *(a)* self-employed contributors, *(b)* employed contributors, not contracted out of SERPS, *(c)* employed contributors, contracted out of SERPS, receiving DSS rebate-only contributions to the scheme, and *(d)* employed contributors, contracted out of SERPS making personal payments in addition to DSS rebates. [21839]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Further to my answer of 1 May, Official Report, columns *112–13*, estimates of the number of self-employed contributors to personal pensions are in the table.

Numbers: Thousands

Type of scheme	*1988–89*	*[2]1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*[3]1993–94*
Self-employed contributors [1]	44	104	238	423	599	n/a

[1] A self-employed person has been defined as someone whose main source of income is from self-employment.
[2] For the years prior to 1990–91 the estimates are less firm because before independent taxation Inland Revenue recorded income separately for the husband and wife, but only recorded allowable deductions from income, such as personal pension contributions, for the tax unit as a whole. Where both husband and wife were self-employed and there was a personal pension contribution, an assumption has been made that it is attributable to only one partner. Where only one partner is in self-employment any PP contributions are assumed to be attributable to that person.
[3] Figures from the survey for the tax year 1993–94 are not yet available.
Source:
Inland Revenue Survey of Personal Incomes.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Retirements and Redundancies

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many staff of *(a)* the Department of National Heritage and *(b)* agencies for which the Department of National Heritage is responsible (i) took early retirement, (ii) took voluntary redundancy, (iii) took compulsory redundancy and (iv) were retired on medical grounds in (1) 1993–94 and (2) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25507]

Mr. Dorrell: The information in respect of the Department of National Heritage and its two agencies, the Historic Royal Palaces agency and the Royal Parks agency, is as follows:

	1993–94	*1994–95*	*1995–96 (estimate)*
DNH			
Early/voluntary retirement	1	[1]3	nil
Compulsory redundancy	nil	nil	nil
Medical retirement	nil	nil	1
HRPA			
Early/voluntary retirement	nil	nil	nil
Compulsory redundancy	nil	nil	nil
Medical retirement	2	6	1
RPA			
Early/voluntary retirement	nil	[1]2	2
Compulsory redundancy	nil	nil	nil
Medical retirement	nil	5	4

[1] Costs charged to the Property Services Agency under the PSA's "Early retirement/Swap Scheme".

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26228]

Mr. Dorrell: My Department has set a performance target of 18 working days from receipt for dealing with written correspondence. If necessary, an interim reply will be issued explaining when the full answer can be provided.

A correspondence tracking system is in place to log correspondence answered via Ministers' offices and to monitor performance. In 1994, there were 6,355 pieces of private office correspondence requiring a reply. Five thousand and twenty, approximately 79 per cent., were answered within the Department's target. Although this is less than one would have hoped, it must be borne in mind that the Department must often consult with its sponsored bodies in order to provide replies.

All telephone inquiries received by the DNH public inquiry unit will be answered on the spot where possible. The remainder will be answered within two working days or by negotiation, as appropriate to the scope of the inquiry. During 1994, all telephone inquiries were dealt with within the agreed target.

All telephone and written inquiries made under the open government code of practice will be answered within the required time scale of 20 working days from receipt of the inquiry as set out in the DNH procedural note.

National Lottery

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) if he will establish national heritage funds for England, Scotland and Wales to administer the funds collected in each country through points of sale; and if he will appoint to each members who are representative of lottery ticket buyers and require them to consult an expense-paid advisory council chosen proportionately by random selection from socio-economic groups who purchase lottery tickets; [26845]

(2) if he will review the operation of the national lottery to ensure that its proceeds are spent on projects which are indisputably of benefit to the socio-economic groups who have bought most of the tickets. [26864]

Mr. Dorrell: The arrangements for distributing the net proceeds of the national lottery were agreed by Parliament and are working effectively. I have no plans to change them.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will make it his policy to invite *(a)* the Federation of Women's Institutes, *(b)* the Townswomen's Guild, *(c)* the British Legion and *(d)* other grassroots non-political organisations to consult their members and put forward each year local projects for the use of national heritage funds obtained from the lottery for the benefit of the socio-economic groups which contribute most of the money. [26877]

Mr. Dorrell: The applications process for grants from the national lottery is open to everyone provided their proposal is for the public good and not primarily for private gain. I am sure that the 11 independent distributing bodies would welcome appropriate applications from the groups mentioned and other similar organisations.

Mrs. Llin Golding: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much money projects concerned with children's play have received from the national lottery. [26752]

Mr. Dorrell: Projects concerned with children's play have not yet received any awards from national lottery proceeds.

Museums and Galleries

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the revenue raised from admission charges to museums and galleries sponsored by his Department for each institution, broken down to show *(a)* revenue from general admission charges and *(b)* revenue from charges for entry to temporary exhibitions in the last year for which figures are available. [26145]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* The information is shown in the table.

Estimated revenue from (a) general admissions to the museum and (b) charges for entry to temporary exhibitions in DNH-sponsored museums and galleries in 1994–95

Institution	*(a)* £ million	*(b)* £ million
British Museum	nil	0.277
Imperial War Museum	3.293	nil
National Gallery	nil	0.224
National Maritime Museum	1.489	nil
National Museum of Science and Industry	1.745	nil
National Museum and Galleries on Merseyside	0.347	0.175
National Portrait Gallery	nil	0.250
Natural History Museum	3.133	nil
Royal Armouries	n/a[1]	nil
Tate Gallery	0.187	1.449
Victoria and Albert Museum	1.143[2]	0.628
Wallace Collection	nil	nil
Geffrye Museum	nil	nil
Horniman Museum	nil	nil
Museum of London	0.270	nil
Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester	0.415	nil
Sir John Soane's Museum	nil	nil
Total	12.022	3.003

[1] It is not possible to provide figures for the Royal Armouries as admission is via a combined ticket to the Tower of London.
[2] The Victoria and Albert Museum suggests a level of voluntary donation for admission to its South Kensington site.

The figures are based on revised information supplied for the purpose by the institutions and include revenue for admissions from outstations of two institutions—the Tate gallery and the national museums and galleries on Mersyside—which do not charge for admission to their main sites.

BBC Production

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what research has been *(a)* undertaken by and *(b)* evaluated by his Department to establish if it is (i) cheaper or (ii) more expensive for the BBC to produce a programme in-house or to commission it from independent producers; and if he will arrange for this research to be published. [26778]

Mr. Dorrell: None. The BBC must determine the most cost-effective way of commissioning and making programmes, and how it meets the statutory obligation to commission 25 per cent. of its qualifying output from the independent sector. My Department is, however, concerned with the wider question of the efficiency of the broadcasting sector, including the BBC and independent producers, in the context of helping the industry to improve its international competitiveness.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what changes he proposes to make to his Department's cash limits and running cost limits for 1995–96. [27839]

Mr. Dorrell: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the following change will be made: The cash limit for class XI, vote 1—programme expenditure and administration—will be reduced by £5,999,000 from £999,272,000 to £993,273,000. The reduction reflects the removal of the gross subhead for ERDF expenditure from the supply estimates. The expenditure, which is wholly pre-funded by receipts from the EC, will be controlled through a new non-voted cash limit, DNH/ERDF for agency payments on behalf of the EC. The level of receipts and payments, mainly in support of projects aimed at promoting tourism, will be brought to the attention of Parliament through the creation of a net token subhead on the vote.

Indemnity Undertakings

Mr. Waterson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was *(a)* the number of indemnity undertakings given by Departments under section 16 of the

National Heritage Act 1980 for the six-month period ending 31 March and *(b)* the value of any contingent liabilities in respect of such undertakings given at any time and which remain outstanding as at 31 March. [27840]

Mr. Dorrell: The information my hon. Friend requests is as follows:

In the six-month period ended 31 March 1995 the following undertakings to indemnify were given by the relevant departments for items on loan to national and non-national institutions.

	Items
Department of National Heritage	469
Scottish Office Education Department	77
Welsh Office Education Department	35
Department of Education for Northern Ireland	14

The values of contingent liabilities in respect of such undertakings given at any time and outstanding at 31 March 1995 are:

	£
Department of National Heritage	2,096,423,871
Scottish Office Education Department	169,842,604
Welsh Office Education Department	25,179,133
Department of Education for Northern Ireland	5,098,379

Disabled Access

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he has taken to ensure access for the disabled to *(a)* theatres and *(b)* cinemas. [25253]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* My Department is a major funding partner in the ADAPT trust, which provides adaptations to theatres, cinemas, and other arts buildings, specifically to improve access for disabled people. I have also written to the chairman of the distributing bodies of national lottery funds, asking that the needs of disabled people are taken into account in the allocation of funds to successful projects. The Arts Council and the regional arts boards are fully committed to access initiatives for disabled people.

Complaints

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what policy and procedures exist for dealing with complaints against his Department by members of the public; when his Department last updated its policy; what time limit and target for dealing with such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedure exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint. [26212]

Mr. Dorrell: Any complaint against my Department will be dealt with as promptly as possible. However, we do not have a formal DNH complaints procedure.

The two executive agencies and the sponsored bodies for which I am responsible are involved more directly in providing services to the public. Both agencies have visitors charters which set out full complaints procedures. In addition, the 23 sponsored bodies having the greatest direct dealings with the public have been asked to draw up charter standard statements. The majority of these have now been published and all set out formal complaints procedures.

Any member of the public who is dissatisfied with how a complaint has been dealt with by either DNH, its two agencies or those of its sponsored bodies which come under the jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration, may ask a Member of Parliament to submit their complaint to the PCA for investigation and review.

Retirements and Redundancies

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the annual cost to the Department of staff leaving under redundancy or early retirement schemes to incorporate (i) added years lump sum payments, (ii) redundancy payments, (iii) pension payments including enhancements and (iv) any other special arrangements for *(a)* 1993–94, *(b)* 1994–95 and projected for *(c)* 1995–96 and *(d)* 1996–97. [25642]

Mr. Dorrell: The Department of National Heritage was created in April 1992, and has two executive agencies, Historic Royal Palaces and Royal Parks, which were created in October 1991 and April 1993 respectively.

The costs to the Department of early retirement and redundancies are borne from the Department's running costs provision. A detailed breakdown of the various costs could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The total costs borne on the Department's and agencies' running costs in 1993–94 and 1994–95 are shown as actual figures. For 1995–96 the amounts are estimated. Projections for 1996–97 will be determined during the public expenditure survey.

The early retirement costs for DNH and HRPA and RPA are shown in the table:

	DNH	*HRPA*	*RPA*
1993–94	£26,866.44	Nil	Nil
1994–95	£30,029.45	Nil	Nil
1995–96	£19,811.40	Nil	£958.72
1996–97	—	—	—

Royal Art Collection

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what additional percentage of works of art in the royal collection has now been recorded on the computerised inventory; and when he expects the undertaking to be completed. [26566]

Mr. Dorrell: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 28 April, column *737*. Any questions concerning the royal collection should be addressed to: The Director of the Royal Collection Trust, Stable Yard house, St. James's palace, London SW1A 1JR.

TREASURY

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will place in the Library a copy of the Treasury guidelines on disposal of surplus Government land. [26276]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Copies of the guidance will be placed in the Library.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what changes are proposed to the Treasury's cash and running costs limits in 1995–96. [27561]

Sir George Young: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate the cash limit for class XVII, vote 1 will be reduced by £3,887,000 from £70,730,000 to £66,843,000 and the running costs limit will be reduced by £17,080,000 from £76,280,000 to £59,200,000. The reductions comprise:

a transfer of responsibility and net provision of £2,395,000, mainly for the central management of the principal civil service pension scheme, to the Office of Public Service and Science class XVIII, vote 1;

a reduction of £2,000,000 in running costs expenditure arising from the Treasury's fundamental expenditure review;

a transfer of £169,000 to the Department of Health; and

an increase in other current and capital expenditure of £677,000.

Tradepoint Financial Networks plc

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about Tradepoint Financial Networks plc. [27752]

Mr. Nelson: The Securities and Investments Board is today announcing its decision to recognise Tradepoint Financial Networks plc—Tradepoint—as an investment exchange under the Financial Services Act 1986.

The Treasury has given SIB leave under the FSA to recognise Tradepoint. This decision was reached after receiving a report from the Director General of Fair Trading. This report concluded that none of Tradepoint's rules has, or is likely or intended to have, any significantly anti-competitive effect. Having considered the DGFT's report, I have concluded that there are no grounds on which the Treasury should refuse SIB leave to recognise Tradepoint as an investment exchange.

ECOFIN

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the recent Council meeting of the Economic and Finance Ministers of the European Union. [27373]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I represented the United Kingdom at the Economic and Finance Council of the European Union in Brussels on 22 May.

The Council reached a broad consensus on a proposed regulation on the protection of the Community's financial interests fraud. I stressed the need for early agreement on an effective text which would produce a significant improvement on existing arrangements.

Political agreement on a common position was reached on the proposed investor compensation directive to set minimum compensation requirements for EU investment firms and credit institutions.

The Commission made short presentations on the state of trans-European networks and their financing; on its spring economic forecasts and on amended proposals for a carbon-energy tax in the light of the conclusions of the Essen European Council.

The Council agreed that the conditions were now met for the disbursement of the 85 mecu loan to the Ukraine agreed in December 1994. There was also broad agreement in principle to a further loan of up to 200 mecu, with a first tranche of 100 mecu, and with the amount of the second tranche to be determined by the Council on the basis of satisfactory burden sharing. The implementation of the loan is to be linked to the Council's assessment of progress on the nuclear question.

The Council adopted a regulation by qualified majority to delay revaluation of the Belgian franc within the agri-monetary system. I made clear the UK's opposition to the proposal and accordingly voted against. I stressed that we would not accept any increase in the agricultural guideline.

There was a brief discussion about pressures on the financial perspectives ceilings for internal and external spending. I agreed with the Dutch and German representatives on the need for more transparency and for budgetary restraint at an EU level as well as at a national level.

North Sea Oil Revenue

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the different sources of Government revenue received in relation to the production of North sea oil; and if he will calculate the total amount of revenue the Government have received from these sources for each year since 1979. [27262]

Sir George Young: Revenues raised from North sea oil and gas production since 1979–80 amount to £75 billion. Annual revenues by category of tax have been as follows:

£million

			Corporation Tax			
Year	*Petroleum revenue tax*	*Supplementary petroleum duty*	*ACT set-off*	*Main-stream CT*	*Royalty*	*Total*
1979–80	1,435	—	78	172	628	2,313
1980–81	2,410	—	97	244	992	3,743
1981–82	2,390	2,025	270	411	1,396	6,492
1982–83	3,274	2,395	202	319	1,632	7,822
1983–84	6,017	—	430	447	1,904	8,798
1984–85	7,177	—	1,244	1,188	2,426	12,035
1985–86	6,375	—	1,085	1,831	2,057	11,348
1986–87	1,188	—	1,130	1,546	919	4,783
1987–88	2,296	—	681	617	1,024	4,618
1988–89	1,371	—	685	510	602	3,168
1989–90	1,050	—	495	248	575	2,368
1990–91	860	—	363	484	605	2,312
1991–92	–216	—	370	268	557	979
1992–93	69	—	480	202	554	1,305
1993–94	359	—	219	39	606	1,223
1994–95	710	—	300	80	540	1,630

Tax Allowances

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate for 1995–96 the average amount of *(a)* income tax reliefs claimed at the marginal rate, *(b)* income tax allowances claimed at the marginal rate, *(c)* income tax reliefs claimed at a rate other than the marginal rate, and *(d)* income tax allowances claimed at a rate other than the marginal rate for those with gross incomes over (i) £70,000, (ii) £80,000 and (iii) £100,000. [25010]

Sir George Young: Provisional estimates at 1995–96 income levels based on a projection of the 1992–93 survey of personal incomes and other survey data in line with assumptions in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1995–96" are given in the table. The estimates do not take account of certain tax reliefs for which detailed distributional information is not available, including personal equity plans, tax-exempt special savings accounts, profit-related pay and national savings.

Values of allowances and reliefs averaged over all taxpayers, 1995–96

Gross Incomes above £	*Income tax reliefs claimed at marginal rate* £	*Income tax allowances claimed at marginal rate* £	*Income tax reliefs claimed at a rate other than marginal rate* £	*Income tax allowances claimed at a rate other than marginal rate* £
70,000	2,490	1,410	290	200
80,000	2,810	1,410	290	200
100,000	3,570	1,410	300	200

EDUCATION

Departmental Budget

Mr. Quentin Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what changes she has to announce to cash limits and running costs on votes within her responsibility for 1995–96. [27444]

Mrs. Gillian Shephard: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class X, vote 2, higher and further education and student support will be amended as follows:

Class and Vote	*Current cash limit* £	*Change* £	*Revised cash limit* £
X.2	5,909,345,000	–1,008,000	5,908,337,000

Notes:

The reduction in the cash limit is made up as follows:

(a) £240,000 represents a transfer to the Welsh Office for payment to the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales to cover the costs of students attending diploma in social work courses in Wales;

(b) £246,000 is to offset increased expenditure on postgraduate awards—non-cash limited; and

(c) £522,000 transfers from the Higher Education Funding Council for England: grant in aid subhead to student loans non-cash limited to contribute to the expected cost of loans to students attending diploma in social work courses.

The opportunity has been taken to provide for the Department to meet outstanding insurance claims from the Royal College of Arts totalling £20,000 by making a new sub-head C2. Grant in aid to the Further Education Funding Council is to be increased by £175,000 to allow for work to commence on colleges to allow for access for students with disabilities. Savings have been identified in sub-head B2—grants and bursaries for teacher training—to offset the cost of this expenditure. There is no increase in net provision as a result.

Teachers' Pensions

Lady Olga Maitland: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will make a statement on the future administration of teachers' pensions in England and Wales. [27443]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend has decided to invite expressions of interest for a contract to administer the teachers' superannuation scheme.

The report that we commissioned from the consultants KPMG concluded that a contract with a private sector company would offer the prospect of substantial savings for the taxpayer. We owe it to the taxpayer to find out whether such savings are indeed available. Inviting expressions of interest for a contract will help to establish this. We shall let a contract only if it would provide better value for money than keeping the administration of the teachers' superannuation scheme in the public sector. We expect that any contract would start in the latter part of 1996.

The contract would require a standard of service and performance that was at least as high as that which the Teachers Pensions Agency would provide. We would monitor the contractor's performance to ensure that he met those standards. A contractor would not be allowed to use data on teachers for purposes other than administering the scheme.

Any contract would concern only the administration of the scheme. Whether or not the administration is contractorised, the scheme itself will stay in the public sector, on its current statutory basis; my right hon. Friend will remain responsible to Parliament for the scheme; and officials in the Department for Education will be responsible for advising Ministers on policy on teachers' pensions. Letting a contract would not affect the size or safety of teachers' pensions in any way.

The Government are absolutely committed to ensuring that the scheme continues to operate smoothly and without interruption. Any contractor would therefore have to be a well-established company with a proven track record and a reputation for sound relations between staff and management. The crucial importance of continuity would give a natural advantage to potential contractors who proposed to continue to operate from the TPA's current site in Darlington.

We are advised that DFE staff who transferred to a new employer would have the protection offered by the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. If we transferred the administration of

the scheme to the private sector, the contracts of employment of those civil servants employed on the work concerned immediately before the transfer would therefore automatically transfer to the contractor.

We are grateful to all those who submitted comments during recent consultations on the TPA's future. I have placed a summary of those comments—and the Government's responses to them—in the Library. The comments showed a widespread view that the TPA provides a good service to teachers. That reflects credit on the staff of the TPA and on its chief executive, Denyse Metcalfe. We now want to build on the TPA's success. We believe that the best way to do so is to invite expressions of interest for a contract to administer the scheme.

School Catering Service

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list in ascending order the difference between income and expenditure for school meal services for all counties over the last seven years. [27305]

Mr. Robin Squire: The table gives the total net expenditure on the school catering service for all counties from 1987–88 to 1993–94, the latest year for which figures are available. The figures are not necessarily comparable because over the seven years returns were not received from all authorities.

School catering services

£000

1987–88 to 1993–94	*1987–88*	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*Net expenditure Total*
Berkshire	n/a	n/a	1,825	1,145	1,522	1,938	2,281	9,614
Lincolnshire	2,002	1,935	1,971	1,982	785	914	875	11,389
Hereford and Worcester	1,645	1,383	1,393	1,372	1,772	1,886	1,809	12,178
Dorset	1,570	1,553	1,624	1,322	1,599	1,998	1,873	12,451
Buckinghamshire	2,118	1,577	2,109	1,519	1,611	1,980	1,659	13,477
Gloucestershire	2,715	2,366	2,835	2,758	2,790	1,959	1,586	17,925
Somerset	4,122	3,038	3,082	3,117	2,311	1,706	1,775	20,084
Cornwall	2,679	2,394	2,312	2,759	3,269	3,394	2,751	20,466
Shropshire	3,899	2,670	3,080	1,881	2,501	3,071	2,643	20,677
West Sussex	2,857	2,427	2,491	2,345	2,993	3,355	3,720	21,126
Suffolk	4,641	2,702	n/a	430	3,624	6,773	2,307	21,412
Northamptonshire	5,575	2,553	3,903	3,535	1,715	2,156	1,883	22,248
Wiltshire	3,210	3,090	3,583	2,985	2,779	2,862	3,039	22,487
Oxfordshire	2,926	2,893	2,445	2,933	2,978	3,303	4,182	22,591
Warwickshire	3,969	3,929	3,284	3,057	3,489	3,722	3,429	25,816
Northumberland	3,786	3,443	3,552	3,513	3,906	3,776	3,150	26,055
Cumbria	4,388	3,544	3,148	3,960	3,826	2,837	3,505	26,117
Cambridgeshire	3,125	2,875	2,679	3,833	3,935	4,707	4,448	26,507
North Yorkshire	6,145	2,884	4,538	3,385	3,201	3,376	3,667	28,123
Bedfordshire	2,995	3,274	3,918	3,795	4,001	5,184	4,786	28,855
Surrey	6,046	2,,508	2,689	3,610	4,400	5,695	3,709	29,593
East Sussex	3,837	3,803	4,464	3,964	5,120	5,950	3,975	32,027
Norfolk	3,655	3,463	3,072	3,917	4,887	6,623	6,169	32,712
Kent	6,281	4,968	6,327	3,302	8,049	5,323	6,055	41,228
Cheshire	8,208	7,356	6,065	4,279	5,079	5,685	5,539	43,117
Devon	6,935	6,766	7,548	4,832	5,537	6,466	6,539	45,534
Hertfordshire	5,746	4,405	4,561	6,319	9,508	9,243	5,396	46,097
Staffordshire	7,154	6,735	4,887	5,211	7,232	7,294	7,526	46,973
Leicestershire	9,156	5,749	5,561	7,041	7,541	6,707	6,633	49,312
Durham	7,458	6,416	7,390	7,331	8,453	9,866	2,158	49,985
Essex	12,462	8,315	6,579	5,366	5,898	6,605	6,235	52,375
Hampshire	6,040	5,719	6,779	7,931	10.333	10,745	11,590	60,054
Nottinghamshire	12,821	12,382	9,960	7,518	n/a	12,045	11,593	67,249
Cleveland	10,073	7,948	8,827	10,158	10,910	10,914	10,258	69,995
Avon	8,789	8,066	7,834	11,484	11,328	11,878	10,599	70,879
Humberside	12,321	9,750	9,396	11,580	14,693	14,992	17,121	90,773
Lancashire	13,987	11,710	12,795	11,266	13,424	14,830	15,074	94,009
Derbyshire	15,723	16,975	14,111	15,336	18,679	19,381	13,908	115,023

n/a not available.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Sir Ralph Howell: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what were the terms of reference of the report of the working party on the measurement of unemployment in the United Kingdom of the Royal Statistical Society; what was the cost to public funds; and who called for or commissioned the report. [25724]

Mr. Oppenheim: The working party on the measurement of unemployment in the UK, set up by the Royal Statistical Society in June 1994, was commissioned by the council of the RSS to investigate the validity of the methods by which unemployment is measured in the UK, and to report back to the RSS. The working party received the support of both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and Her Majesty's Opposition. The only cost to public funds involved the

time devoted by Ministers and officials to providing the RSS with information.

Skills Shortage

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on estimates of skills shortages recorded in surveys conducted by private or public bodies which he has evaluated for each standard region; and if he will make a statement. [25766]

Miss Widdecombe: The 1994 "Skills Needs in Britain" survey found that 11 per cent. of medium and large firms were experiencing recruitment difficulties; the 1994–95 "Skills Needs of Small Firms in Britain" survey found that 8 per cent. of small firms were experiencing them.

The following table shows the percentage of employers experiencing recruitment difficulties in each of the two surveys by Training Enterprise and Education Directorate region:

Per cent.

TEED region	*Skill needs in Britain 1994 (medium and large firms)*	*Skill needs of small firms in Britain 1994–95*
South-east	16	7
London	11	13
South-west	6	5
West midlands	13	6
East midlands	17	10
Eastern	7	
Yorkshire and Humberside	8	9
North-west (excluding Greater Manchester)	10	4
Greater Manchester	13	
Northern	8	4
Scotland	7	11
Wales	3	10

Recruitment difficulties are not necessarily due to skill shortages. Employers may not be able to fill posts because job seekers are looking for better pay or conditions, or employers are too selective.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Brandreth: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what changes will be made to cash limits or running costs limits of his Department for 1995–96. [27429]

Mr. Portillo: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made:

the case limit or class V, vote 1—Department of Employment: programmes and central services—will be increased by £9,465,000 from £2,112,246,000 to £2,121,711,000;

the gross running cost limit for the Department of Employment—class V, vote 1—will be reduced by £35,000 from £1,363,739,000 to £1,363,704,000.

The cash limit increase on class V, vote 1 is to provide for ex gratia payments to sponsors of European social fund projects which have been approved by the Department, but which have not been accepted by the European Commission.

The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The running costs limit reduction is the result of a transfer of administrative costs to the Scottish Office contingent on the transfer to it of ESF provision.

Young People

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people in the United Kingdom have either education or training places and what were the figures in 1979.

Mr. Paice *[pursuant to his reply, 7 March 1995, c. 132]:* I regret that the figure for the percentage of 16 and 17-year-olds in education or training in the UK in 1984 given in my oral reply was incorrect. The incorrect figure given was that 54 per cent. of 16 and 17-year-olds in the UK in 1984 had education or training places. The correct figure for 1984 is 70 per cent. This represented 1.3 million young people in 1984. The figures for spring 1994 remain unchanged at 84 per cent. of 16 and 17-year-olds, representing 1.1 million young people.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Housing

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what new measures he will adopt to meet housing need. [25934]

Mr. Moss: Under the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive is required to assess housing need and to develop programmes for meeting that need. The executive and housing associations have effective programmes to meet need both by direct provision and by facilitating or enabling other individuals or agencies to do so. The housing policy review and on-going research will help determine any future proposals for meeting housing need.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the research project commissioned by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive into waiting lists, allocations and urgent housing rent will be completed. [25942]

Mr. Moss: The initial report on the research project is expected to be with the executive by 26 January 1996.

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the review into the housing selection scheme will be completed. [25941]

Mr. Moss: The review of the housing selection scheme is expected to be completed by March 1996.

Special Advisers

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the professional qualifications of the special advisers appointed by his Department; and whom they advise. [25956]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have appointed one special adviser who works directly to me. It is not my practice to comment on the qualifications of my special advisers.

Fixed Penalty Notices

Mr. Peter Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many fixed penalty notices have been issued by the Royal Ulster Constabulary in each of the police divisions in Belfast since 31 August 1994. [25939]

Sir John Wheeler: The number of fixed penalty notices issued by the RUC in each of the Belfast police divisions, from 1 September 1994 to 31 March 1995, is as follows:

A Division: 17,360
B Division: 2,404
D Division: 3,249
E Division: 2,943

Health Boards (Staff)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what changes have taken place to terms and conditions of employment for staff transferred to private contractors under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 in support services in the health boards since 1990. [26002]

Mr. Moss: For each contract awarded to a private contractor under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, the staff transferred with their existing terms and conditions. It is not known what changes, if any, have taken place subsequent to transfer as this is properly a matter for the employers and employees concerned. Any changes resulting from a transfer have, of course, to be the subject of negotiation and agreement between the relevant parties.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Live Animal Transport

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) how the requirement in article 3.1(a) of EC directive 91/628, that member states shall ensure that no animal shall be transported unless suitable provisions have been made for its care on arrival at the place of destination, has been transposed into United Kingdom law; [24733]

(2) what arrangements he has made to fulfil Her Majesty's obligation under article 3.1(a) of EC directive 91/628, to ensure that no animal is transported unless suitable provisions have been made for its care on arrival at the place of destination, and if he will make a statement. [24734]

Mrs. Browning *[holding answer 16 May 1995]:* When transposing directive 91/628, we took the view that the provisions of British domestic legislation on the treatment of animals on agricultural land gave the assurance required under Article 3.1(b) of the directive.

Fisheries Policy

Mr. Butcher: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will argue for the repatriation of fisheries policy at the forthcoming IGC. [25445]

Mr. Jack: My right hon. Friend has no plans to raise this issue at the next IGC.

Healthy Eating

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list his Department's projects aimed at promoting healthy eating, indicating the cost of each project to his Department. [26303]

Mrs. Browning: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply being given to him by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health, which covers my Department's joint involvement in the work of the nutrition task force.

In addition to the initiatives being taken forward under the nutrition task force programme, my Department is involved in a number of projects to promote healthy eating through education and information. The costs of these are as follows:

	Total cost up to end 1994–95 financial year £
Foodsense Healthy Eating booklet	178,800
Foodsense Healthy Eating for Older People booklet	20,300
Foodsense Healthy Eating video for the deaf	23,000
Eight Guidelines for a Healthy Diet (booklet and poster)	23,300
Substantial funding of the British Nutrition Foundation's School Resource Pack "Food a Fact of Life"	1,046,000
Healthy Eating for Toddlers ((a booklet for mothers) in the course of development). A comic for children, based on the Food Sense booklet for adults (in the course of development)	Costs yet to be determined
The British Nutrition Foundation schools pack and the proposed comic for children cover food safety issues as well as healthy eating.	Costs yet to be determined

Live Animal Exports

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on how many occasions calves have been returned from Baginton airport to their premises of origin; and flow long they remained there before being re-transported. [26425]

Mrs. Browning: I am advised that in 1994 and 1995, there were five occasions when calves were returned to premises of origin from Baginton airport. On two occasions calves that had been so returned were re-exported through Baginton airport where they were subject to welfare checks by officials. The calves had remained at the respective premises of origin for periods of two days and three days before restarting their journey.

SCOTLAND

A78

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement indicating the latest position as regards proposals for the Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston bypass. [25334]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 23 May 1995]:* I wrote to the hon. Member on 31 January to let him know that I had accepted that a more northerly alignment than that previously proposed should be adopted. Design for this new alignment is progressing to enable publication of new draft statutory orders in 1996.

Zetland Primary School

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if the Government intend to approve the closure of Zetland primary school in Grangemouth in central region. [26872]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend's consent to the closure of a non-denominational primary school is required only in the circumstances prescribed in schedule 2 to the Education (Public and Consultation etc.) (Scotland) Regulations 1981, namely, where the number of pupils at the school is greater than 80 per cent. of its pupil capacity, or where pupils would have to attend a different school five or more miles from the school proposed for closure. My right hon. Friend understands that neither of these criteria applies in the case of Zetland primary school, Grangemouth and any decision to close it would, therefore, be entirely a matter for the education authority.

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what procedure applies to the Central regional council to close Zetland primary school in Grangemouth. [26850]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Any education authority which makes a proposal to close a school is required to consult in accordance with the detailed provisions of the Education (Publication and Consultation etc.) (Scotland) Regulations 1981, and to have regard to any representations made to it by persons it is required to consult.

Tourism

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the estimated annual value of wildlife tourism in Shetland. [27121]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: This information is not collected. Shetland Islands Tourism estimates, however, that around 20 per cent. of visitors to the islands come primarily to watch the wildlife. The estimated annual value of tourism to Shetland is around £10 million.

Primary Schools

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance he issues about the minimum number of pupils for a primary school. [26857]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has issued no guidance on this subject. The detailed organisation of school provision is a matter for education authorities, having regard to local circumstances and their statutory duty to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education.

Civil Servants

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of civil service posts, including positions in executive agencies but excluding technical appointments at grades 1 to 6 which have been advertised, together with the number of applicants, interviewees and appointees broken down to show *(a)* civil servants and *(b)* non-civil servants for each year from 1 January 1990 to 31 December as a whole in Scotland. [26942]

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the form requested, but I would refer the hon. Member to the answer given yesterday by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Brent Spar Platform

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to intervene in the proposed dumping at sea by the Shell oil company of the Brent Spar platform. [26691]

Sir Hector Monro: The deep sea disposal of the Brent Spar buoy in the north-east Atlantic at a depth in excess of 2,000 m will not present a hazard to the environment or to other users of the sea including fishermen. Disposal in this way complies fully with our obligations under international conventions. Accordingly, Shell UK has received the necessary approval for this disposal.

Scottish Nuclear

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those aspects of the proposed privatisation of Scottish Nuclear which will require parliamentary approval. [27252]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* The Government's White Paper "The Prospects for Nuclear Power in the UK", Cm 2860, stated—paragraph 7.30—that no primary legislation is required to privatise the nuclear generators.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland which areas of land in the constituency of Cunninghame, North he intends to dispose of as part of the proposed privatisation of Scottish Nuclear. [27250]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Scottish Nuclear Ltd. has already disposed of most of the land belonging to the company in the Hunterston area for which it has no foreseeable need. No decision has yet been taken about how much land belonging to Scottish Nuclear Ltd. will be privatised with the company.

Dental Services

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the percentage of people aged five to 18 years with permanent teeth which are actively decayed, filled or missing due to decay. [27200]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is contained in the table.

Proportion of people in Scotland with permanent teeth which are actively decayed, filled or missing

Age	*Percentage of people*
5	1
6	6
7	18
8	29
9	41
10	46
11	56
12	61
13	65
14	71
15	79
16	n/a
17	n/a
18	n/a

Note:
n/a = not available.
Source:
OPCS Survey—"Children's dental health in the United Kingdom 1993".

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the *(a)* number of adult courses of treatment, *(b)* total national health service gross expenditure, *(c)* total cost borne by the Exchequer and *(d)* total cost borne by patients, for the general dental service for each year between 1990 and 1994. [27197]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is contained in the table.

General dental services in Scotland

Financial year	Number of courses of treatment[1]	Gross expenditure[2] (£000s)	Cost borne by exchequer[2] (£000s)	Patient charges[2] (£000s)
1990–91	[3]1,037,633	118,470	82,456	36,014
1991–92	2,321,853	142,828	99,754	43,074
1992–93	2,384,442	141,285	101,368	39,917
1993–94	2,440,745	134,204	93,756	40,448
1994–95	2,500,826	n/a	n/a	n/a

[1] Dental practice division of the Common Services Agency.
[2] Annual accounts of the 15 Scottish health boards.
[3] These figures are counted from the beginning of the current dental contract introduced on 1 October 1990.
n/a = not available.

Youth Training

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many 16 and 17-year-olds were seeking training places in each division of Ayrshire at 1 May; and what were the numbers of vacancies. [27253]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 June]:* On 30 April, 424 young people under 18 years of age in Ayrshire were seeking training places. Information is not available to split this figure by smaller areas within Ayrshire. I understand from Scottish Enterprise that on 30 April there were 407 youth training and skillseeker vacancies in the Enterprise Ayrshire area. Both these figures are subject to daily fluctuation as young people move into and out of youth training.

British Steel

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on the proposed removal of steel-making equipment from Hunterston; what implications for public funds are involved; and if he will make a statement. [27248]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Decisions about British Steel plc's assets at Hunterston are a matter for that company to take in the light of commercial considerations. There would, therefore, be no implications for public funds.

Charitable Schools

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those schools in Scotland which have charitable status; and if he will estimate the total sum gained by such schools through *(a)* rebates on local council taxes, *(b)* tax reductions in connection with gifts and covenants, *(c)* tax reductions on bank deposits and *(d)* provision of cheap butter. [27313]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* The information is not available.

Gourock Ropeworks

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the development of the designated Gourock ropeworks site within the Inverclyde enterprise zone. [26158]

Mr. Kynoch: Renfrewshire Enterprise is discussing the options for the development of the Gourock ropeworks site with the site owner. These options will need to take account of the listed building status of the ropeworks.

Parklea Site

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the development of the designated Parklea site within the Inverclyde enterprise zone. [26160]

Mr. Kynoch: The options for the development of the Parklea site in the Inverclyde enterprise zone are constrained by its inclusion in a potential special protection area in terms of the EC directive on the conservation of wild birds. This is likely to preclude any development of the site which would adversely affect conservation interests.

Fine Defaulters

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were imprisoned because of their failure to pay fines levied by the courts in the last year for which figures are available, and in each of the past 15 years. [26191]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of this question related to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman A. Godman, dated 7 June 1995:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of individuals imprisoned because of their failure to pay fines levied by the courts.

Information on the number of individuals imprisoned because of their failure to pay fines is not available. The table below shows the number of fine default receptions in 1994 and the preceding fifteen years. Receptions do not equate to "persons received". For example, where several fine default sentences are imposed on an individual by one court in one day this is counted as one reception. Where fine default sentences are imposed on a person by two or more courts in one day, however, two receptions are recorded. In addition, if a fine default warrant is received for an individual already serving a custodial sentence then this is regarded as a separate reception.

Year	Male	Female	Total
1979	5,737	290	6,027
1980	7,047	342	7,389
1981	6,444	311	6,755
1982	9,030	422	9,452
1983	8,772	557	9,329
1984	8,431	452	8,883
1985	10,829	735	11,564
1986	9,969	657	10,626
1987	10,365	618	10,983
1988	9,170	544	9,714
1989	8,644	510	9,154
1990	6,455	380	6,835
1991	7,295	614	7,909
1992	7,792	547	8,339
1993	8,878	738	9,616
1994[1]	8,174	701	8,875

[1] Information for 1994 is provisional.

Water Pollution

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of recorded cases of water pollution caused by *(a)* agricultural activities and *(b)* industrial firms in each of the past five years; how many of these cases resulted in court hearings; how may individuals or parties were successfully prosecuted in the courts; and if he will make a statement. [26192]

Sir Hector Monro: The information for 1992–93 and 1993–94 is set out in the table. Figures are not available for previous years.

	1992–93	*1993–94*
Cases of water pollution[1]		
Agricultural	495	663
Industrial	796	801
Prosecutions for water pollution offences[1]		
Brought	48	54
Successful	40	48

[1] Recorded by river purification boards.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what changes he intends to make to the cash limits and running costs provision for 1995–96 within his responsibility. [27857]

Mr. Lang: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, I intend to make changes to two voted cash limits.

a. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 2, training programmes, roads and transport services, industrial and regional support, Scotland will be increased by £1,038,000 from £940,184,000 to £941,222,000. The increase takes account of a transfer from the Department of Trade and Industry to provide a technology advisory service to small and medium-sized businesses.

b. The cash limit for class XIV, vote 5, housing and environmental services, Scotland will be increased by £420,000 from £416,648,000 to £417,068,000. The increase in provision is required to meet the administrative costs associated with the creation of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and will be found within existing Scottish Office provision.

Neither of these changes will therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Kashmir

16. **Mr. Heppell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the burning of the mosque and village of Charar-e-Sharief in Kashmir on Thursday 11 May. [25447]

Mr. Baldry: We deeply regret the burning of the village of Charar-e-Sharief in Kashmir and its historic shrine. We have urged all sides to exercise restraint. We shall continue to try to promote a peaceful solution in Kashmir.

29. **Mr. Lidington:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the political situation in Kashmir. [25460]

Mr. Baldry: We remain concerned by the situation in Kashmir. The Indian Government have made clear their intention of holding elections there before mid-July. Free and fair elections might provide the first step towards the genuine political process for which we have long called.

Middle East

21. **Sir David Madel:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the latest developments in the middle east peace process. [25452]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the recent announcement of an agreed framework for negotiations on security arrangements between Israel and Syria, and are urging both sides to press on. We also welcome Israel's suspension of the planned expropriation of land in east Jerusalem and the prospect of Israel and the Palestinians reaching agreement on elections and redeployment in the west bank by 1 July. We have pressed successfully for the EU to play the lead role in monitoring the Palestinian elections. Bilaterally and through the EU we are continuing to support the Palestinian Authority. We are giving $2 million bilaterally towards the EU's new package of support for Palestinian recurrent costs.

34. **Mr. Dunnachie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in the middle east. [25465]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We welcome the recent announcement of an agreed framework for negotiations on security arrangements between Israel and Syria. We continue to urge all parties to the peace process to redouble their efforts to reach a comprehensive settlement.

Intergovernmental Conference

22. **Mr. Jenkin:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the Government will publish their contributions to the EU IGC reflections group; and if he will make a statement. [25453]

Mr. David Davis: The Council report to the study group, to which we contributed, has been published as a Command Paper, Cm 2866. We have also contributed a memorandum on European defence which was tabled in the House on 1 March, *Official Report*, columns 1060–74. We will continue to keep Parliament fully informed of developments.

23. **Mr. Mudie:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with the Foreign Ministers of the other European Union countries about the preparations for the 1996 intergovernmental conference. [25454]

Mr. Hurd: I see my European counterparts regularly at meetings of the Foreign Affairs Council, and for bilateral discussions. We all met at Messina last Friday to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Messina conference. I discussed the IGC in general terms with a number of colleagues.

25. **Sir Thomas Arnold:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what progress was made in Messina by the IGC reflections group on 2 June. [25456]

Mr. David Davis: The study group discussed the scope and structure of its work.

33. **Mr. David Shaw:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the United Kingdom's position on the 1996 intergovernmental conference. [25464]

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister set out very clearly our approach to the IGC, at Leiden in September and in this House on 1 March.

British Citizens

24. **Mr. Trimble:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what steps are taken to protect the rights of British citizens domiciled in foreign countries. [25455]

Mr. Baldry: It is our duty to safeguard the interests of all British nationals overseas. The functions of consular officers are set out in the Vienna convention on consular relations which entered into force in the United Kingdom on 8 June 1972, a copy of which may be seen in the Library of the House.

Nuclear Non-proliferation Conference

26. **Mr. Martyn Jones:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a further statement on the outcome of the nuclear non-proliferation conference. [25457]

Mr. David Davis: No. I have nothing further to add to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary in the House on 16 May, *Official Report*, columns 151-61.

Atlantic Alliance

27. **Mr. Hargreaves:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of whether European defence can and will continue to be developed within the framework of the Atlantic alliance. [25458]

Mr. David Davis: We are committed to maintaining NATO as the bedrock of our common defence. The NATO summit in January last year welcomed the emergence of a European security and defence identity as a means of strengthening the European pillar of the alliance while enabling European allies to take greater responsibility for their common security and defence.

The proposals set out by the Prime Minister in this House on 1 March, *Official Report*, columns 1060-74, would promote this objective by allowing Europeans to act together more effectively within the Western European Union.

Western European Union

28. **Dr. Goodson-Wickes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with his counterparts in Europe over the foreign policy implications of the creation of new defence forces within the WEU. [25459]

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence and I discussed this issue with our counterparts from WEU countries in Lisbon on 15 May. The objective is not to create new standing forces but to establish common arrangements which will allow existing national forces to cooperate more effectively together in both the WEU and NATO frameworks.

In this context, WEU Ministers welcomed the arrangements for land and maritime forces announced by France, Italy and Spain at Lisbon.

Tibet

30. **Mr. Trend:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations Her Majesty's Government have made about human rights in Tibet. [25461]

Mr. Goodlad: My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary last raised the issue of human rights in Tibet when he met Chinese Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen in New York on 18 April.

Rwanda

31. **Mr. Eastham:** To ask the Secretary for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in Rwanda. [25462]

37. **Mr. Loyden:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on relations with Rwanda. [25468]

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the reply I gave earlier to the hon. Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Ms Anderson).

Fissile Materials

32. **Mr. Llew Smith:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the negotiations for a fissile materials cut-off convention are expected to start. [25463]

Mr. David Davis: We anticipate that negotiations will begin in June when the conference on disarmament reconvenes in Geneva.

Women's Rights

35. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contribution he has made to the Government's report to the UN Beijing conference in September with regard to women's human rights. [25466]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My Department was closely involved in the preparation of the UK national report for the Peking conference. We have also taken a leading role in seeing to negotiate acceptable human rights language in the draft platform for action to be agreed at the conference.

Arms Exports

36. **Mr. Foulkes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the Government's policy on arms exports. [25467]

Mr. David Davis: It is our policy to support the sale of British defence equipment overseas where this is compatible with our political, strategic and security interests. We observe strict responsibility in our defence exports. We consider applications for licences to export defence equipment on a case-by-case basis in the light of established criteria including the international guidelines to which we are committed.

Kenya

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what requests he has received from the government of Kenya for assistance in the design of a new constitution appropriate for a multi-party democracy. [26636]

Mr. Baldry: We have not received a formal request from the Kenyan Government to provide an expert to help take forward the process of constitutional review. We have indicated to the Kenyan authorities that we would give careful and sympathetic consideration to any such request.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the cases involving the harassment of opposition hon. Members which he has taken up with the Government of Kenya. [26637]

Mr. Baldry: We regularly take up charges of harassment and detention of opposition MPs at all levels of the Kenyan Government, frequently in response to particular events. It is, however, not possible to provide precise details of all cases taken up. We shall continue to raise our concerns with the Kenyan authorities, who can be in no doubt about the importance we attach to this matter.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has made to the Government of Kenya about the opposition Member, Paul Muite. [27015]

Mr. Baldry: We have raised at the highest levels our concerns about the arrest and detention of opposition MPs, including Mr. Paul Muite.

Angola

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about progress in the peace process in Angola and the involvement of British peacekeeping forces. [27325]

Mr. Baldry: In its statement of 11 May, the Security Council welcomed the recent positive developments in Angola, in particular the meeting between President dos Santos and Dr. Savimbi in Lusaka on 6 May. This has given new impetus to the peace process. The UK has contributed a 600-strong logistics battalion to UNAVEM III for three months and provided training in mine clearance in preparation for the deployment of a Zimbabwean battalion.

Journalists' Facility Trips

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list facility trips abroad which have been granted to British newspaper journalists in the last two years. [25907]

Mr. Baldry: The details are as follows:

Date of visit	*Destination*	*Number in press party*
1–4 June 1993	Romania Bulgaria Macedonia	4 Journalists
6–8 September 1993	UAE Saudi Arabia	7 Journalists
22–24 October 1993	Syria	6 Journalists
3–7 January 1994	Lebanon Israel Occupied Territories Jordan Malta	10 Journalists
19–20 January 1994	Turkey	2 Journalists
4–11 April 1994	Brazil Falklands	2 Journalists
22–24 May 1994	Russia Ukraine	3 Journalists
11–20 September 1994	Thailand Vietnam Hong Kong Japan	2 Journalists
12–14 October 1994	Kuwait Bahrain Saudi Arabia Jordan Syria Turkey	16 Journalists
4 December 1994	former Yugoslavia	11 Journalists
3–9 January 1995	Bangladesh India Pakistan	1 Journalist (4 others—Lahore/Islamabad leg only)
13–14 February 1995	Sweden	1 Journalist
11–12 April 1995	Slovakia Poland	2 Journalists

In all cases, journalists are charged for air and ground transportation.

Nuclear Safeguards

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what new proposals he has to improve the surveillance of nuclear installations by the International Atomic Energy Authority. [25431]

Mr Hurd: The International Atomic Energy Agency has made proposals to strengthen its safeguards system. These will be discussed by the board of governors in June. The proposals now strengthen the agency's ability to detect undeclared nuclear activity. The UK strongly supports this initiative to strengthen safeguards and we will try to get it quickly agreed and put into effect.

Special Operations Executive

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he plans to release more records of the wartime Special Operations Executive. [27753]

Mr. Hurd: I said on 26 November 1993 that a review of the SOE archives had begun. Since then, as I have said in later answers in 1993 and 1994, the records on the far east, Scandinavia, the middle east and north Africa have been made available to the public. The next batch, on eastern Europe, will be opened by the Public Record Office on 9 June 1995. Further SOE records will be made available in due course.

European Union

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on forthcoming business in the Council of the European Union. [27754]

Mr. David Davis: The information is as follows:

MONTHLY FORECAST OF BUSINESS FOR JUNE 1995

June 1: Development Council
Energy Council
June 6: Internal Market Council
June 9: Research Council
June 12: FAC
June 13: FAC
Telecom
June 15: Fisheries Council
June 17: FAC
June 19: Transport Council
ECOFIN
June 20: Transport Council
Justice and Home Affairs Council
June 21: Justice and Home Affairs Council
Culture/Audiovisual Council
June 22: Environment Council
June 23: Environment Council
June 26: Agriculture Council
June 27: Agriculture Council
June 29: Social Affairs Council

2. The following subjects were discussed:

June 1: Development Council

Adoption of the agenda.
(Poss) Approval of the list of "A" items.
Follow-up to the statement of 18 November 1992 on co-operation and development up to 2000.
a) Complementarity between the development policies and actions of the Union and its Member States.
b) Consistency between the various Community policies.
c) Operational co-ordination.
Structural adjustment Draft resolution.
Regional Integration Draft statement.
Research in Developing Countries Draft statement.
Evaluation.
Development Co-operation with South Africa Draft conclusion.
Basic rules on Humanitarian Aid.
Progress of discussions on:
Actions on rehabilitation assistance
Migration and Development
Rwanda.
Other business.

June 1: Energy Council

Internal market in electricity: Council conclusions.
Trans-European energy networks: possible common positions on guidelines and supporting measures.
Energy policy Green Paper: Council Resolution.
Thermie II: possible decision.
Energy efficiency of fridges and freezers: progress report.
Under "Any Other Business": Energy Charter: progress report; and energy dimension to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference: exchange of views/possible Council Conclusions.

June 6: Internal Market Council

White Paper on extending Single Market to the CEEs: discussion amongst the 15 on White Paper, followed by session (and lunch) with CEE and Baltic Ministers.
Operation of the Single Market (routine presentation and discussion of implementation figures and annual report on Single Market, plus announcement of Commission plans for "Citizens Guide to Single Market").
Deregulation: progress report on Molitor group.
Uniform application and effectiveness of Single Market rules and national penalties for violations of them: Council Resolution.
Draft decision on notification of national decisions derogating from free movement of goods (which sets up a procedure to identify cases where mutual recognition does not occur)—common position.
Customs 2000: orientation debate on draft decision establishing a programme of practical measures to ensure customs rules work effectively.
Legal Protection of Database Directive: common position.
Community Designs Regulation; progress report.
European Co-operative Society: progress report on draft Directive and Regulation establishing common rules for European Co-ops.
Bankruptcy Convention: political agreement.
Novel foodstuffs: common position on directive introducing EC rules for genetically modified foodstuffs.

The following subjects are likely to be discussed:

June 9: Research Council

Council Resolution on Research Co-ordination.
EC/Switzerland Scientific and Technical Co-operation Agreement.
EC/Israel Co-operation Agreement.
Task Forces.
Fourth Framework Programme Enlargement Increase Orientation Debate.
ITER (International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor) plus joint meeting with Associated countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

June 12–13: Foreign Affairs Council

Draft Agenda:
Preparation of the Cannes European Council.
Racism and Xenophobia: global strategy of the Union.
Relations with the CEEs:
Implementation of the pro-accession strategy White Paper
Relations with the Baltic States:
Decision on signature of the Association Agreement (possible A point)
Lome mid-term review: EDF VIII
Mediterranean policy:
Adoption of report on preparation of the Euro-Med Conference
(possible) Tunisia: decision on signature of new agreement
(possible) Israel: conclusion of negotiations on new agreement
State of negotiations with Morocco and Egypt
(possible) Lebanon: adoption of negotiating directives
Turkey:
Adoption of draft common position on EC/Turkey Customs Union
Decision to seek consent of European Parliament
Relations with Cyprus:
Adoption of Union position at EC/Cyprus Association Council
Decision on signature of fourth financial protocol
Relations with Malta:
Adoption of Union position at EC/Malta Association Council
Decision on signature of fourth financial protocol
Relations with Russia.
Relations with Ukraine.
Relations with certain republics of the former Soviet Union.
Former Yugoslavia.
Commercial questions.
Free trade areas.
(possible) WTO code of conduct.
Negotiations in the WTO framework.

Preparation of Halifax G7 summit and meetings with US and Japan.
South Africa.
Negotiating directives for a trade and co-operation agreement and protocol to the Lomé Convention.
GSP agriculture.
(possible) Relations with Mercosur.
Adoption of negotiating directives for an inter-regional framework co-operation agreement.
Relations with Chile:
Commission strategy paper on strengthening EU/Chile relations.
Vietnam (possible):
Conclusion of negotiations on a co-operation agreement
Euratom/US nuclear energy agreement (possible)
In the margins:
Association Council with Cyprus
Association Council with Malta

June 13: Telecoms Council
Council Resolution on Infrastructure Green Paper (Part 2).
Council Resolution on Mobile Telephony.
Council Resolution on Postal Services.
ONP Voice Telephony Directive: common position.
Council Conclusions on Article 90 Cable Network Directive.

June 15: Fisheries Council
Western waters effort regulation.
Driftnets.
Socio-economic measures (possible).
Amendment to technical conservation measures.
UN Conference on stradling stocks (possible).

June 19: ECOFIN
Preparation for European Council (Cannes—26–27 June).
Broad economic guidelines (recommendation for 1995–96 and consideration of implementation 1994–95).
Essen follow-up (likely to include employment policy).
Decisions on excessive deficits.
Regulation on protection of the Community's financial interests.
Examination of Member States' reports on measures to combat fraud and waste.
Green paper on transition to a single currency (discussion).
Macro—financial assistance to third countries.
Biofuels: draft directive on excise duty relief for biofuels.
VAT:
reduced rate for cut flowers;
approximation of rates (Commission report).
Statistical questions;
European System of National and Regional Accounts.
Harmonising consumer price indices.
Cross-border payments: agreement on common position.
EIB lending to South Africa (possible A point).
TENS financing (possible).
CO2/energy tax: orientation debate (possible).
European Investment Bank: a meeting of EIB Board of Governors will be held on the same day.

June 19–20: Transport Council
Maritime:
Maritime statistics directive—adoption.
Ro-Ro Ferry Safety—Regulation on early implementation of International Safety Management Code (ISM)—Common position. (possible) Resolution on shipping external relations.
Aviation:
EC/US relations.
Airport ground handling—orientation debate.
Mutual recognition for aviation components—Council Conclusions.
Land, etc:
Trans-European Networks—consideration of EP Opinion.
High speed rail interoperability—common position.
Tachographs—orientation debate.
Harmonisation of road signs—resolution.
Telematics—resolution.
Railway licensing and access directives—adoption of common position in light of EP opinion.
(possible) Transport research—resolution.

June 20–21: Justice and Home Affairs Council
Europol Convention.
Fraud against the Community Budget.
Common Visa List.
Brussels (2) Convention.
Title VI Finance.

June 21: Culture/Audiovisual Council
Revision of Broadcasting Directive: orientation debate.
Media II: orientation debate.
New financial instrument for the Audiovisual Sector.

June 22–23: Environment Council
Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC).
Air Quality Framework Directive.
Wildlife Trade (CITES) Regulation.
Major Accident Hazards (Seveso II) Directive.
Climate Change.
Ecological Quality of Water Directive.
Biocides Directive.
LIFE Programme (Financial Instrument on the Environment).
Waste Shipment Regulation.
Negotiating Mandate on the Basle Convention.
Nuclear safety in the Central and Eastern Europe.
Priority Waste Streams: End-of-life Vehicles.
JEPS (Joint Environment Programmes).

June 26–27: Agriculture Council
Price fixing.
Cotton.
Italian, Spanish and Greek milk quota.
Reform of the wine sector (possible).
Agrimony (possible).
Reform of the rice regime (possible).
Animal welfare.
Trade in bovines (amending 64/432).
Feedingstuffs (possible).
Hormones (possible).

June 29: Labour and Social Affairs
Essen follow-up on employment.
Draft Directive on Posted Workers.
Draft Directive on Use of Work Equipment.
Draft Decision on Programme to Combat Social Exclusion.
Draft Decision on Action to support Older People.
Draft amendments to Regulation 1408/71 (Social Security).
Resolution on Older Workers.
Conclusions on the Quality of Vocational Training.
Presidency Report on amendments to Acquired Rights Directive.

EU Foreign Affairs Council

Mr. Jacques Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of the Foreign Affairs Council on 29 May. [27755]

Mr. David Davis: The A points listed in document 7405/95, which has been placed in the Library of this House, were adopted without a vote.

The Council discussed the situation in former Yugoslavia in the light of recent developments on the ground.

The Council adopted conclusions on proposals for greater transparency in its work.

The Council approved a text for standard human rights clauses in Community agreements with third countries.

There was a discussion of the Commission's White Paper on approximation of laws in the context of enlargement to the countries of central and eastern Europe.

The Council adopted conclusions on policy towards the Baltic sea region, and approved a paper on policy towards the Baltic states. A decision was taken to sign Europe agreements with the three Baltic states on 2 June.

Approval was given for the signature of an interim agreement with the Ukraine on 1 June.

The Commission reported on the state of play in negotiations for new agreements with Israel and Morocco.

There was a further brief discussion of the European development fund—EDF VIII.

The Council discussed the prospects for signature of the EC/Russia interim agreement, and agreed to return to the subject at its meeting on 12 June.

The Council agreed to the inclusion of Croatia in the PHARE programme, and decided to consider the opening of negotiations for an EU-Croatia trade and co-operation agreement on 12 June.

The Council discussed, and broadly welcomed, the Commission's recent communication on Japan; and agreed conclusions on the current US-Japan dispute over automobiles and automotive parts.

The Council discussed the continuing negotiations with Canada under article XXIV.6 of the general agreement on tariffs and trade.

The Commission reported on its negotiations with the US on a new US/Euratom nuclear trade and co-operation agreement. The Council will return to the subject on 12 June.

Germany presented a memorandum proposing changes to the EC banana regime: there was no substantive discussion.

Finally, there was a brief discussion of the planned pre-accession strategy for Cyprus. The presidency noted that arrangements were in hand for the 12 June EU/Cyprus Association Council.

No votes were taken at the Council.

A copy of the Council's conclusions will be placed in the Library of the House as soon as it is available.

TRANSPORT

Departmental Budget

Mr. Lidington: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has to change his Department's cash limits, running costs limit, and external finance limits for 1995–96. [27569]

Dr. Mawhinney: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised estimate, the cash limit for class VI, vote 6 will be reduced by £1 million from £81,156,000 to £80,156,000. This reduction reflects an increase in appropriations in aid in respect of services provided by the Marine Safety Agency. It will be used to offset an increase of £1 million from nil to £1 million in the Vehicle Inspectorate's external finance limit, and there will therefore be no effect on the planned total of public expenditure.

Aviation Negotiations (USA)

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what progress has been made in aviation negotiations with the United States of America; and if he will make a statement. [27858]

Dr. Mawhinney: I am pleased to announce that on 5 June, the UK and US Governments reached agreement on a package of new opportunities for UK and US airlines. This will mean that passengers will be able to benefit from greater frequency of transatlantic service and wider choice, and the prospect of more competitive fares.

The deal allows increased services for British Airways on its Heathrow-Philadelphia route, allows a second US airline to operate the Heathrow-Chicago route, confirms and extends the terms of the regional liberalisation offer which I made last October, substantially liberalises code-sharing arrangements and allows UK airlines the opportunity to carry some US Government traffic which has, up to now, not been open to UK airlines.

Both Governments agreed that the provisions of the agreement would come into effect once the US Government had approved all outstanding code share applications by British Airways in respect of US Air.

Both Governments have also agreed to begin work immediately on the next stage of negotiations with the aim of opening up further opportunities.

Midland Links Motorways

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many days in each of the past 10 years there have been lane closures on the viaducts of the midland links motorways. [26985]

Mr. Watts: It is not possible to establish precisely how many days in each of the past 10 years there have been lane closures on the midland links motorways viaducts. In addition to the programmed major refurbishment works, which include periodic lane closures, there have been closures required for emergency works and for routine maintenance. The major refurbishment contracts are as follows, with duration of each contract:

i. 1995—M6 Gravelly Hill and Bromford West Viaducts, (on-going contract expected to last for as total of eight months).
ii. 1994—M6 Bromford East Viaduct (12 months).
iii. 1994—M5 Western Arm, (eight months).
iv. 1993—M5 Eastern Arm, (11 months).
v. 1993–Gravelly Hill CB/EB, (five months).
vi. 1992—Gravelly Hill CA (three months).
vii. 1992—Gravelly Hill CD/DC, (four months).
viii. 1991—M6 Ray Hall, (six months).
ix. 1991—Gravelly Hill CF/FC, (three months).
x. 1990—M6 Bescot Viaduct and Fullbrook Embankment, (10 months).
xi. 1990—M6 Thornbridge Viaduct Verges and Perry Barr Locks, (four months).
xii. 1990—Gravelly Hill BC, (two months).
xiii. 1989—M5 Junction 1 to MP2, (three months).
xiv. 1989—M5 Junction 1 to MP5.6, (three months).
xv. 1988—M6 Thornbridge Viaduct, (three months).
xvi. 1988—Gravelly Hill EA, (three months).
xviii. 1987—M5 Oldbury Viaduct, (10 months).

By using temporary narrow lanes at times of peak traffic demand, the programmed closures have not materially restricted capacity below that otherwise available. At all other times, sufficient capacity has been maintained to accommodate the prevailing traffic flow with minimum delay.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how and on what basis the substructure motorway maintenance contracts issued by his Department for the midland links motorways are divided between W. S. Atkins and Partners and Maunsell and Partners. [26986]

Mr. Watts: The viaduct commissions are divided on a geographical basis. G. Maunsell and Partners' responsibilities cover the M6 from junction 5, to and including junction 7. W. S. Atkins' responsibilities cover the M6 from the west of junction 7 to the north end of Bescot viaduct immediately north of junction 9 and the M5 from where it diverges from the M6 to the southern end of Titford viaduct, just south of junction 2.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the cost of the maintenance and repair of the midland links motorways in each year since 1983. [26987]

Mr. Watts: The cost of the maintenance and repair of the midland links motorways, which are taken to be the M6 from junction 5 to immediately north of junction 9 and the M5 from the M6 to just south of junction 2, is as follows:

£ million

Financial year	*Outturn cost of maintenance and repairs*
1983–84	[1]0.9
1984–85	[1]2.5
1985–86	[1]4.0
1986–87	5.6
1987–88	8.8
1988–89	7.1
1989–90	16.7
1990–91	25.2
1991–92	22.7
1992–93	22.3
1993–94	28.7
1994–95	38.0

[1] Structural maintenance only—roadworks carried out by WMCC—records not available.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current arrangements for the maintenance and repair of the midland links motorways. [26988]

Mr. Watts: The Highways Agency, acting on behalf of the Secretary of State, has engaged the services of three firms of consulting engineers to assist in the management, maintenance and repair of the midland links motorways. These are, for the structures and viaducts, W. S. Atkins and Partners and G. Maunsell and Partners and, for the road surface, street furniture and embankment sections, Owen Williams. All three commissions come to an end in April 1996 and the way forward from then on is currently under review.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many lane miles of the midland links motorways have been resurfaced in the past 10 years; and what proportion this figure is of the total lane miles. [26989]

Mr. Watts: Some 86 lane miles have been resurfaced in the past 10 years out of a total of 118 lane miles—that is, 73 per cent.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport on how many occasions the bearings, plinths and joints have been replaced on each of the viaducts on the midland links motorways in the past 10 years; and at what cost. [26990]

Mr. Watts: In the past 10 years, there has been no programme to replace the bearings or bearing plinths on any of the viaducts. In isolated cases, it has become necessary to replace the bearing plinths because of other works to the structure. Bearings have been replaced only as a consequence of other modifications to the structure. In total, 0.5 per cent. of the bearings and 4.5 per cent. of the bearings plinths have been replaced in this period. The costs associated with the replacements cannot be accurately determined as they were carried out in conjunction with other operations.

The expansion joints are replaced during the course of resurfacing contracts. In the past 10 years, the expansion joints have been replaced once on Oldbury, Ray Hall, Bescot, Wigmore, Thornbridge and Bromford viaducts together with most of those on Gravelly hill viaduct. The type of joints used on the midland links viaducts are subject to routine maintenance at five to eight-year intervals to ensure their continuing satisfactory performance. Occasionally, this requires complete replacement of isolated joints. The costs associated with the joint replacement cannot be accurately determined as they are carried out in conjunction with other operations.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vehicles are using the midland links motorways on a daily basis; and what was the design estimate of usage. [26991]

Mr. Watts: The number of vehicles using the midland links motorways on a daily basis varies between junctions. The busiest section, between junctions 8 and 9 of the M6, has an average weekday traffic flow of approximately 160,000 vehicles per day whereas the section between junctions 1 and 2 of the M5 has an equivalent flow of 90,000 vehicles per day. A motorway of this standard would have been expected to carry traffic flows of around 70,000 vehicles per day.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many contracts have been let for the repair of the parapet wall and rails of each viaduct on the midland links motorways in the past 10 years; and at what cost. [26992]

Mr. Watts: In the past 10 years, there have been six contracts let specifically for the repair of parapet rails. Three of these contracts were for work on Bromford viaduct, one for Gravelly Hill viaduct and two for Ray Hall viaduct. The total cost of this work was about £1.75 million.

Since 1992, as a consequence of safety and traffic management considerations, the repair of parapets, where required, has been included within the major resurfacing. The cost of the parapet repairs included within these contracts cannot readily be identified.

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport which 10 companies have been the most successful tenderers for construction work of all descriptions on the midland links motorways in the past 10 years. [26993]

Mr. Watts: Between 1985 and 1987, no significant contracts were awarded, apart from some minor repair trial contracts, painting contracts, term maintenance contracts and three contracts to provide and install gutters under the deck joints. The 10 companies which have been the most successful tenderers since 1987, in terms of the number of contracts awarded are:

Name	*Number of contracts awarded*
R and C Williams	15
EPL	9
AMEC (Fairclough)	6
Currall, Lewis and Martin	6
Tarmac	6
Galliford	6
Edmund Nuttall	6
Tilbury Douglas (R M Douglas)	5
Christiani and Nielsen	5
Kinmain	5

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will set out in respect of the substructure motorway maintenance contracts administered for his Department by W. S. Atkins and Partners and Maunsell and Partners *(a)* the numbers of contracts for each section of the midland links motorways since responsibility was removed from the former West Midlands county council, *(b)* the tender sum of each contract, *(c)* the final account of each contract and *(d)* the successful tenderer in each contract. [27030]

Mr. Watts: The substructure motorway maintenance contracts administered by G. Maunsell and Partners and W. S. Atkins are listed in the table. In addition to those contracts listed, the consultants have administered contracts for the hire of access equipment, some minor repair trial contracts and three contracts to provide and install gutters under the deck joints.

W. S. Atkins and Partners

£ million

Contract ref.	*Viaduct*	*Contractor*	*Tender sum*	*Final account*
Con A	Oldbury and Bescot	John Laing	0.677	1.220
R1	Oldbury and Bescot	Currall, Lewis and Martin	1.396	1.572
R3	Oldbury	Fairclough	0.339	0.342
R5	Oldbury	R. M. Douglas	0.809	[1]—
R7	Ray Hall and Bescot	Shand	1.231	1.216
R9	Wigmore	M. J. Gleeson	0.463	0.457
R11	Oldbury	Shephard Hill	0.764	0.727
R13	Wigmore	Currall, Lewis and Martin	0.359	0.466
R15	Oldbury	Currall, Lewis and Martin	0.357	0.358
R17	Oldbury	Christiani and Nielsen	1.354	[1]—
R19	Oldbury	Christiani and Nielsen	1.120	[1]—
R21	Oldbury	Fairclough	0.96	[1]—
R23	Several	Fairclough	0.551	0.577
R25	Ray Hall and Bescot	Shand	1.464	1.579
R27	Several	E. Williams	0.065	0.063
R31	Ray Hall	Edmund Nuttall	0.688	[1]—
R33	Wigmore	Trafalgar House	0.586	[1]—
R35	Bescott	Trafalgar House	0.598	[1]—
R37	Oldbury	Edmund Nuttall	1.498	[1]—
R39	Oldbury	Shephard Hill	1.231	[1]—
R41	Ray Hall	M. J. Gleeson	0.937	[1]—
R43	Bescot	Taylor Woodrow	1.183	[1]—
R45	Ray Hall	Christiani and Nielsen	0.791	[1]—
R47	Oldbury	C. J. Pearce and Co.	0.110	0.111
R49	Titford and Junction 2	Tarmac	2.114	[1]—
R51	Wigmore	Taylor Woodrow	1.644	[1]—
Routine Maintenance Contracts				
A	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.149
C	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.161
F	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.118
H	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.289
K	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.138
M	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.186
P	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.271
R	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.398
T	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.326
V	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	[1]—

[1] Accounts not finalised.

[2] Schedule of rates contract.

G. Mansell and Partners

£ million

Contract reference	*Viaduct*	*Contractor*	*Tender Sum*	*Final Account*
B	Gravelly Hill	Currall, Lewis and Martin	0.299	0.343
R2	Gravelly Hill	Galliford	0.284	0.316
R4	Gravelly Hill	Galliford	0.281	0.549
R6	Gravelly Hill	Fairclough	0.506	0.516
R8	Thornbridge	Tarmac	0.372	0.593
R10	Witton	Tarmac	0.232	0.340
R12	Gravelly Hill	Edmund Nuttall	0.876	0.888
R14	Gravelly Hill	Norwest Holst	0.405	0.509
R16	Gravelly Hill	Fairclough	0.400	0.461
R18	Queslett	Currall, Lewis and Martin	0.342	[1]—
R20	Thornbridge	Fairclough	0.504	0.583
R22	Witton	Galliford	0.408	[1]—
R26	Bromford	Ian Williams and Co.	0.055	0.074
R28	Gravelly Hill	Norwest Holst	0.495	0.606
R30	Gravelly Hill	A Monk	0.599	[1]—
R32	Bromford	Balvac Whitley Moran	0,299	[1]—
R34	Gravelly Hill	Trafalgar House	0.579	0.619
R38	Bromford	Kier	0.965	[1]—
R40	Bromford	Tarmac	0.398	[1]—
R42	Gravelly Hill	Christiani and Nielsen	0.667	[1]—
R44	Gravelly Hill	Tarmac	0.620	[1]—
R46	Bromford	Currall, Lewis and Martin	0.330	[1]—
R50	Bromford	Balvac Whitley Moran	1.415	[1]—
R52	Thornbridge	Tarmac	0.596	[1]—
R54	Bromford	Tilbury Douglas	1.397	[1]—
R56	Gravelly Hill	Balvac Whitley Moran	1.215	[1]—
Routing Maintenance Contracts				
B	n/a	Clee Hill/R and C Williams	[2]—	0.218
D	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.118
E	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.082
G	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.262
J	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.150
L	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.195
N	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.173
Q	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.185
S	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	0.427
U	n/a	Prismo	[2]—	0.719
W	n/a	R and C Williams	[2]—	[1]—

Mr. Rooker: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the area of responsibility of Sir Owen Williams and Partners as agents of his Department in respect of the midland links motorways; how many contracts they have issued since 1983; and what was the tender value of each, the final account of each and the successful tenderer in each case. [27031]

Mr. Watts: Owen Williams Consulting Engineers—formerly Sir Owen Williams and Partners—responsible for the day-to-day routine maintenance of the carriageways of the whole of the midland links network. In addition, its responsibilities cover the major maintenance contracts on the earthworks sections of the links. Also, on the viaducts, it is responsible for the design and supervision of the traffic management, carriageway surfacing and drainage and street furniture above deck waterproofing as part of major hybrid contracts co-ordinated by the structural consultants.

Since 1991, when Owen Williams was first appointed to the maintenance commission, eight contracts have been awarded for which it has sole responsibility, as listed in the table.

£ million

Scheme	*Contractor*	*Tender value*	*Final account*
Term Maintenance Contract 3	Prismo	[2]—	3.983
Term Maintenance Contract 4	Prismo	[2]—	[1]—
Verge Safety Fencing M6 J6-J7	Invicta Fencing	0.060	0.056
Central Reserve Renewal	Wrekin Construction	0.616	[1]—
M5 Palisade Scheme 1	A and A Lamb	0.030	0.025
M5 Palisade Scheme 2	A and A Lamb	0.104	[1]—
Perry Barr Salt/Urea store	Droicon Plc.	0.438	[1]—
M6 Noise Barrier	Royston Steel Fencing Ltd.	0.137	[1]—

[1] Accounts not yet finalised.

[2] Schedule of rates contract.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will state each specific benefit he expects to arise from the privatisation of train operations that could not be achieved by public enterprise in each case specifying where such features exist outside the United Kingdom, under which current railway administration and the extent to which that administration is directly or indirectly in receipt of public funds. [26738]

Mr. Watts: I expect that the advantages of privatisation and competition that we have seen in other industries—improved service to the customer at lower cost—will be achieved by our plans for the railway industry. Great Britain is at the forefront of railway privatisation and liberalisation so the lessons of privatised industries in this country are more relevant than international comparisons.

Railways (Information)

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take steps to ensure that it is not to the financial disadvantage of those responsible for passenger train services for there to be a comprehensive display of all their services calling at stations operated by Railtrack at at least one central location on each station. [27317]

Mr. Watts: The financial arrangements for meeting the cost of information displays is a commercial matter for the parties concerned, which is subject to regulation by the rail regulator through station access agreements and licensing.

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what *(a)* statutory obligations and *(b)* non-statutory obligations apply to train operators in respect of advertising and displaying at the stations served by their services the timetables and fares relating to those services and for these to be changed substantially at times determined on a national basis. [27315]

Mr. Watts: In the new railway, station access agreements will impose contractual rather than statutory obligations on the station operator to provide and display up-to-date timetable information at the station. Meanwhile, BR's policy is that all its units should provide appropriate timetable information for passengers at all relevant points.

Retirements and Redundancies

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the annual cost to his Department of staff leaving under redundancy/early retirement schemes to incorporate *(a)* added years lump sum payments, *(b)* redundancy payments, *(c)* pension payments, including enhancements and *(d)* any other special arrangements for (i) 1993–94, (ii) 1994–95, (iii) projected for 1995–96 and (iv) projected for 1996–97. [25666]

Mr. Norris: The detailed breakdown of the various costs could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many staff of *(a)* his Department and *(b)* agencies for which his Department is responsible (i) took early retirement, (ii) took voluntary redundancy, (iii) took compulsory redundancy and (iv) were retired on medical grounds in (1) 1993–94 and (2) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25499]

Mr. Norris: The figures for 1993–94 and 1994–95 in the following table, are taken from the Department's personnel computer system. The figures for 1995–96 are our latest projections.

	Central Transport Group	*Agencies*
1993–94		
Early retirement	31	32
Voluntary redundancy	3	93
Compulsory redundancy	0	0
Medical retirement	36	95
1994–95		
Early retirement	29	222
Voluntary redundancy	11	181
Compulsory redundancy	1	32
Medical retirement	20	103
1995–96		
Early retirement	320	10
Voluntary redundancy	2	560[1]
Compulsory redundancy	0	56
Medical retirement[2]	1	20

[1] Some of these staff may go under early retirement.
[2] These are actuals—it is not possible to forecast medical retirements.

Fishing Vessels (Ownership)

Dr. Strang: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many vessels on the United Kingdom register of fishing vessels are owned by interests based in each EU member state. [25139]

Mr. Norris: The information requested cannot be obtained except at disproportionate cost.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Offshore Licensing

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he intends to introduce regulations regarding the implementation of the EU hydrocarbon directive, onshore petroleum licensing and further amendments to the offshore licensing regime. [27563]

Mr. Eggar: The following sets of regulations which are due to come into force on 30 June were laid before the House yesterday.

The Hydrocarbons Licensing Directive Regulations 1995 (SI 1995 No. 1434);

The Petroleum (Production) (Seward Areas) (Amendment) Regulations 1995 (SI 1995 No. 1435);

The Petroleum (Production) (Landward Areas) Regulations 1995 (SI 1995 No. 1436);

The EU hydrocarbons licensing directive—94/22/EC—was adopted in May 1994. It is designed to extend the single market principles of transparency and non-discrimination to the award of licences to explore for and develop oil and gas. The directive received the whole-hearted support of Her Majesty's Government. It will provide United Kingdom companies with opportunities to compete on equal terms for licences and contracts in other EU member states and thereby put to good use their hard-won experience and expertise in offshore petroleum production. The directive is being implemented through the three sets of regulations announced today. The Hydrocarbons Licensing Directive

Regulations set out the criteria for the award of licences. The Seaward Areas (Amendment) Regulations, and the Landward Area Regulations reflect the detailed changes needed to implement the directive.

In addition, the new landward areas regulations, which follow discussions with the industry, introduce a new framework for onshore licensing. This will comprise a single licence, the petroleum exploration and development licence or, PEDL, which replaces the separate exploration, appraisal and development licences. Returns relating to the progress of operations under a licence will in future be required annually rather than every six months. The introduction of a single licence covering all stages of activity, together with the reduced reporting requirement, will make the licensing system more flexible, reduce bureaucracy and thereby lessen the burden on the industry.

Applications for PEDLs will be invited in licensing rounds, as is under the current system. Later this year I will publish in the *Official Journal* of the European Communities a formal announcement giving the detailed financial terms for new landward licences and the basis on which awards will be made. The notice will invite applications for a new round of onshore licensing.

In parallel with the new round, I will be inviting holders of existing exploration, appraisal and production licences to transfer acreage in these licences to the new style PEDL.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) what effect the implementation of EU directive 85/337 on environmental impact assessments in respect of offshore oil and gas licensing will have on the 16th offshore licensing round; and if he will make a statement; [26548]

(2) when he will bring forward regulations to implement EU directive 85/337 on environmental impact assessments in respect of offshore oil and gas licensing. [26550]

Mr. Eggar: I intend to introduce the necessary regulations by April 1996, in accordance with the confirmation given to the European Commission on 18 April 1995. It is intended that these regulations will, when in force, apply to developments under licences awarded in the 16th round. It has been the Government's policy since 1988 to attach special conditions to licences for blocks within 25 miles of the coast or in other sensitive areas requiring companies to carry out environmental impact assessments before any consent for development is given. Such conditions will be attached to those blocks awarded in the 16th round which are within 25 miles of the coast or in other sensitive areas.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when his Department informed the EU Commission that it would enact EU directive 85/337 on environmental impact assessment in respect of offshore oil and gas licensing; and if he will place a copy of that response in the Library. [26549]

Mr. Eggar: The Government confirmed to the European Commission on 18 April 1995 that legislation to implement directive 85/337 in respect of oil and gas licensing would be introduced within the next year. This was in response to a letter from the Commission following up a complaint by a third party. The detail of correspondence between the Commission and member states relating to complaints of this kind is confidential between the parties and I shall not, therefore, be depositing a copy in the Library of the House.

National Weights and Measures Laboratory

Dr. Twinn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what targets he has set his Department's National Weights and Measures Laboratory for 1995–96. [27564]

Mr. Heseltine: I have set NWML the following targets for 1995–96:

to ensure that all fee earning activities are self-financing;

to increase output per person employed by 5 per cent.;

to reduce the real cost of a programme hour by 2 per cent.;

to complete 95 per cent. of all type examinations within 12 weeks; and

to complete 95 per cent. of all calibration jobs within 18 days of acceptance of the work.

In addition, I expect the chief executive of NWML to continue to reply within 10 working days to all letters from Members of Parliament delegated to him for reply.

Price Marking Order 1991

Dr. Twinn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he proposes to defer the requirement in the Price Marking Order 1991 for certain products to display unit price from 7 June. [27565]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Consumer Affairs and Small Firms has today laid before Parliament legislation to defer until 7 June 1997 the requirement in the Price Marking Order 1991 for certain consumer products to display their unit price from 7 June 1995.

Trade organisations, consumer groups, and local authority trading standards departments have been consulted about this deferment.

Departmental Budget

Dr. Twinn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what changes will be made to his Department's cash limits for 1995–96. [27566]

Mr. Heseltine: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimates, the following changes will be made. The cash limit for class IV, vote 1—programmes and administration—will be increased by £13,962,000 from £1,209,867,000 to £1,223,829,000. The increase is the net result of an increase of £15,000,000 for new initiatives primarily relating to locally delivered business services, international trade and industrial research and a reduction of £1,038,000 for assistance to collaborative research projects following a transfer to the Scottish Office. The increase will be charged to the reserve and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

The cash limit for class IV, vote 3—privatisation of the coal industry—will be increased by £10,499,000 from £3,629,000 to £14,128,000. The increase, which is expenditure outside the control total, mainly covers payments to purchasers of regional coal companies and of care and maintenance collieries in accordance with the sale contracts.

Cinema Ownership

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what level of concentration of cinema chains entails referral to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and if he will make a statement. [27080]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The is no level of concentration, whether of cinema chains or of other businesses, which automatically triggers reference to the MMC. Under the Fair Trading Act 1973, my right hon. Friend the President of the Board of Trade may refer any merger which involves the acquisition of assets worth more than £70 million, or which creates or increases a 25 per cent. market share. Under the monopoly provisions of the Act, the Director General of Fair Trading referred the supply of films to cinemas to the MMC, whose report was published in October 1994.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what inquiries his Department has recently received in respect of references to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission of cinema ownership. [27081]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The Department has received a small amount of correspondence on the possible sale of MGM cinemas. This has been forwarded to the Director General of Fair Trading, who advises on possible merger references to the MMc. In addition, the Department has received a small amount of correspondence on the MMC's recent report on the supply of films to cinemas.

Mr. Elletson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will take into account the effect on competition in the regions in his consideration of the proposed bid for MGM cinemas by the Rank Organisation. [27161]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South on 15 May 1995, *Official Report*, column 29.

Export Licences, Indonesia

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what export credit rating is given to Indonesia by the Export Credits Guarantee Department measures; what is the total number of export licences granted for export to Indonesia in each of the past five years; and what is the number refused in each of those years. [26979]

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* ECGD does not operate a system of credit ratings but is open for business in Indonesia under its normal range of facilities.

The table shows the number of export licences granted and refused for export to Indonesia in the past five years:

Year	*Granted*	*Refused*
1990	100	0
1991	89	2
1992	106	1
1993	98	0
1994	81	5

Financial Services Act 1986

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many prosecutions have been mounted under the Financial Services Act 1986; and how many were successful. [26108]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: A number of organisations may bring prosecutions under the Financial Services Act. Details are not kept centrally. Information is being sought and I will write to the hon. Member further.

Trade, Bangladesh

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when an official United Kingdom trade mission last visited Bangladesh. [26921]

Mr. Needham: The last official United Kingdom trade mission to visit Bangladesh was organised by the DTI's southern Asia advisory group and took place between 12 and 15 November 1994. The mission was led by the Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the amount of trade between the United Kingdom and Bangladesh in each of the last three years. [26923]

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Trade figures: United Kingdom/Bangladesh 1992–94

£ million

	1992	*1993*	*1994*
Exports	39.4	54.3	55.7
Imports	95.0	140.1	156.0

Mr. Cox: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when an official trade mission from Bangladesh last visited the United Kingdom. [26919]

Mr. Needham: The last official trade mission from Bangladesh to visit the UK was a Jute delegation led by Mr. M. Janibul Huq, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Jute, between 6 and 18 June 1993.

Lyonnaise des Eaux

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on how many occasions officials or ministers of his Department met Lyonnaise des Eaux before the announcement of the proposed bid for Northumbrian Water. [26317]

Mr. Heseltine: Officials from my Department and the Department of the Environment met representatives of Lyonnaise des Eaux on one occasion before the proposed bid was announced. The meeting was concerned with the regulatory issues which any bid would raise.

Dr. John Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if Ministers or officials in his Department discussed the proposed bid for Northumbrian Water by Lyonnaise des Eaux with Ofwat prior to the announcement taking place. [26318]

Mr. Heseltine: In view of the provisions of the Water Industry Act 1991, there were contacts between officials from the Department of the Environment and the Director General of Ofwat about the legal and regulatory implications of the proposed bid. DTI officials were present at one meeting.

Shipbuilding

Dr. Godman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much money was paid to United Kingdom shipyards by way of European Union's seventh directive

on shipbuilding intervention fund in the last year for which records are available, and how much has been paid to United Kingdom shipyards since the intervention fund was introduced. [26159]

Mr. Eggar: Shipbuilding intervention fund payments to United Kingdom merchant shipyards amount to £15.3 million from 1 April 1994 to 31 March 1995 and £604.7 million since the scheme was introduced.

Steel Industry

Mrs. Helen Jackson: (Sheffield Hillsborough): To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many new recruits have been taken on in the steel industry in each of the last three years. [26392]

Mr. Eggar: The number of new recruits who have been taken on in the steel industry in each of the last three years was:

thousands

	1992	*1993*	*1994*
Number of entrants	3.1	2.3	n/a

Source:
Eurostat.

Industrial Federations

Mr. MacShane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list by industry the industrial federations with which he has held meetings since 1993. [26681]

Mr. Heseltine: My ministerial colleagues and I have had meetings with a wide range of industrial and commercial representative bodies.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what representations he has had in the past 12 months from *(a)* the Engineering Employers Federation and *(b)* the Confederation of British Industry's national manufacturing council. [26680]

Mr. Eggar: Ministers and officials of my Department have frequent contact with the EEF and the CBI national manufacturing council.

Employer's Organisations

Mr. MacShane: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the employers' organisations with which he meets. [26682]

Mr. Heseltine: My ministerial colleagues and I meet industrial and commercial representative bodies when issues of mutual interest arise.

Export Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, columns *902–3*, concerning the percentage change in United Kingdom export unit values for manufacturers relative to those of the Six, if he will publish the corresponding figures for Italy. [26560]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The information is given in the table.

Percentage change on previous quarter in Italian export unit values relative to others in the other EEC6[1]

	Change on previous quarter
1987q1	-1.5
1987q2	0..0
1987q3	0.0
1987q4	0.6
1988q1	-0.4
1988q2	-0.9
1988q3	-2.7
1988q4	0.4
1989q1	0.4
1989q2	0.6
1989q3	1.8
1989q4	-0.9
1990q1	0.5
1990q2	1.5
1991q1	2.1
1991q2	1.1
1991q3	0.5
1991q4	-0.5
1992q1	2.0
1992q2	-0.4
1992q3	-1.4
1992q4	-9.9
1993q1	-1.1
1993q2	4.0
1993q3	0.5
1993q4	-1.7
1994q1	2.3
1994q2	1.6

[1] UK, Belgium/Luxembourg, France, Netherlands and Germany. 1. Unit value indices in US$ for EEC(6) are weighted together using total trade weights.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, column *902-3*, concerning the percentage change in United Kingdom export unit values relative to those of the Six, if he will list the increase in relative unit values between the fourth quarter of 1976 and *(a)* the fourth quarter of 1986 and *(b)* the second quarter of 1994; and if he will provide comparable information for the non-Six EEC countries and the non-EEC countries. [27083]

Mr. Needham: The information requested relating to EEC Six and non-EEC countries are given in the table. Unit value indices for manufactured goods are readily available only for those EEC countries listed in table D6 of the monthly review of external trade statistics, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Percentage change in the UK export unit values for manufacturing relative to EEC 6[1] *and non-EEC*[2] *countries between 1976 Q4 and a) 1986 Q4 and b) 1994 Q2*

	a	*b*
EEC 6[1]	17.1	29.6
Non-EEC[2]	10.7	20.4

[1] United Kingdom, Belgium/Luxembourg, France, Netherlands and Germany.
[2] United States, Japan, Canada, Sweden and Switzerland.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, columns *902-3*, concerning the percentage change in United Kingdom export unit values for manufactures relative to those of the Six, if he will publish for the corresponding quarters the changes in the volume of

exports of manufactures by the United Kingdom and the EEC Six respectively. [26561]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The information requested is given in the table.

	United Kingdom	*Belgium/Luxemburg*	*France*	*Germany*	*Italy*	*Netherlands*
1987 q1	2.6	1.3	3.1	2.9	-2.7	3.9
1987 q2	8.2	8.7	7.0	3.8	3.7	7.3
1987 q3	-1.7	-13.3	-6.9	-3.1	2.8	-8.1
1987 q4	23.7	27.5	24.5	21.1	19.2	25.6
1988 q1	-8.5	-0.4	4.6	-9.1	-14.0	-1.7
1988 q2	11.4	3.9	4.4	8.3	18.9	5.2
1988 q3	-8.0	-16.4	-16.5	-10.3	-15.7	-9.8
1988 q4	14.7	23.6	18.8	21.2	23.9	16.5
1989 q1	-4.4	2.4	5.4	-6.1	-11.5	-2.0
1989 q2	0.7	1.0	1.6	1.0	13.9	-1.0
1989 q3	-5.9	-13.0	-15.8	-6.2	-7.4	-9.0
1989 q4	17.6	18.2	26.5	14.3	18.6	17.5
1990 q1	-1.7	10.7	8.5	9.6	-3.8	9.9
1990 q2	8.6	-2.6	-1.6	-5.2	13.6	-1.0
1990 q3	0.5	-2.0	-4.7	0.1	-7.3	0.1
1990 q4	19.4	18.4	22.6	16.6	21.5	15.5
1991 q1	-14.7	-1.0	-2.5	-2.9	-10.6	-2.9
1991 q2	0.6	-10.8	-8.0	-13.4	-4.0	-11.2
1991 q3	-7.1	-13.1	-7.5	0.2	-12.3	-2.9
1991 q4	17.3	18.5	21.0	14.2	26.4	13.8
1992 q1	-9.5	2.7	1.3	-0.6	-6.8	-1.0
1992 q2	8.8	0.5	-0.8	-4.7	4.4	-0.4
1992 q3	-3.7	-5.0	-2.4	10.3	-0.9	3.4
1992 q4	-0.8	3.7	3.4	-1.6	-1.7	-0.5
1993 q1	-3.5	n/a	n/a	-16.8	n/a	-13.2
1993 q2	2.5	n/a	n/a	-1.0	n/a	5.3
1993 q3	-5.4	n/a	n/a	-6.7	n/a	-5.7
1993 q4	10.4	n/a	n/a	16.4	n/a	11.4
1994 q1	-2.6	n/a	n/a	-7.2	n/a	-4.5
1994 q2	5.1	n/a	n/a	14.2	n/a	1.1
1994 q3	0.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1.9
1994 q4	13.3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Source:
OECD Monthly Statistics of Foreign Trade—adjusted for trade in miscellaneous goods.
UN Monthly Bulletin of Statistics

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, column *909*, concerning the percentage change in the UK export unit values relative to those of the Six, what effect the reduction in relative exports unit values between the second quarter of 1988 and the first quarter of 1990 had on the volume of imports from the exports to *(a)* the EEC and *(b)* the EEC Six, and if he will list in each case the corresponding increase in imports and exports time-lagged by *(c)* six months and *(d)* 12 months. [26930]

Mr. Needham: The available information on relative export unit values and the volumes of trade with the other 11 EC countries is given in the table. Estimates for the effects on imports and exports, of unit values in isolation from the other relevant factors, are not readily available.

UK trade with the EC-12 (percentage change on previous quarter)

		Six-month lag		*Twelve-month lag*	
	UK export unit values[1]	*Import volume*	*Export volume*	*Import volume*	*Export volume*
1988 Q2	2.0	6.1	-2.5	1.3	-1.0
1988 Q3	-0.5	0.2	3.5	-0.3	5.5
1988 Q4	-1.7	1.3	-1.0	0.5	2.7
1989 Q1	-1.5	-0.3	5.5	0.4	1.4
1989 Q2	-2.5	0.5	2.7	-0.3	2.6
1989 Q3	-0.6	0.4	1.4	-1.2	3.0
1989 Q4	-4.3	-0.3	2.6	-3.9	2.9
1990 Q1	-3.1	-1.2	3.0	-2.5	1.8

[1] UK export unit value indices in $US, relative to those for EC6.

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26231]

Mr. Ian Taylor: All DTI management units and agencies are required to set specific performance targets in MINIS. These targets vary from unit to unit to reflect the diversity of activities undertaken by the Department, and are designed to ensure high performance and quality

of service. All performance measures and targets are monitored and reviewed annually in MINIS to ensure that they are challenging and will lead to continued improvements in output and performance.

More detailed information about individual management units' performance measures are published annually in the Department's MINIS documents. A copy of MINIS 94 is available in the Library of the House. MINIS 95 will be available next month. Agencies' targets are published in their annual reports.

Consumer and Export Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will bring up to the present date the information contained in the answer of 19 December 1980, *Official Report*, column 361, comparing the rise in consumer prices and export prices in Japan and the United Kingdom from 1952 to 1979; and if he will list the corresponding figures for the average annual rate of growth of GDP for each of the last 30 years. [27127]

Mr. Needham: The information is in the table:

UK and Japan—changes in consumer and export prices 1952 to 1993

	Percentage change 1952–93	
	Consumer prices	*Export unit values*[1]
United Kingdom	1,243	795
Japan	553	11

[1] In terms of US dollars. Comparable figures in terms of national currencies are not readily available.

United Kingdom and Japan—growth of real GDP 1964 to 1994

Per cent.

	UK	*Japan*
1964	5.4	11.7
1965	2.9	5.8
1966	1.9	10.6
1967	2.3	11.1
1968	4.4	12.9
1969	2.4	12.5
1970	2.1	10.7
1971	1.6	4.3
1972	2.8	8.2
1973	7.6	7.6
1974	–1.5	–0.6
1975	–0.7	2.9
1976	2.7	4.2
1977	2.6	4.7
1978	2.7	4.9
1979	2.7	5.5
1980	–2.0	3.6
1981	–1.2	3.6
1982	1.8	3.2
1983	3.7	2.7
1984	2.0	4.3
1985	4.0	5.0
1986	4.0	2.6
1987	4.6	4.1
1988	5.0	6.2
1989	2.2	4.7
1990	0.6	4.8

United Kingdom and Japan—growth of real GDP 1964 to 1994

Per cent.

	UK	*Japan*
1991	–2.1	4.3
1992	–0.5	1.1
1993	2.2	0.1
1994	3.9	1.0

Source:
IMF International Financial Statistics.
OECD Main Economic Indicators.
OECD Economic Outlook.
OECD Annual National Accounts Vol. 1.
CSO.

Social Audit

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what research is being undertaken into the development of a social audit for companies; what action is being considered to support the publication of a social audit by companies or to include the provision of this information within the annual report; and if he will make a statement. [26917]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: My Department is not undertaking any research into the development of a social audit for companies or considering any action to support the publication of a social audit by companies.

Community Business Sector

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what figures are available on the community business sector of the economy; what action he is taking to collect further information on the extent of the community business sector; what discussions he has undertaken with the representatives of community business in the United Kingdom; what proposals he has under consideration to improve the climate for developing community business further; and if he will make a statement. [26916]

Mr. Page: My Department does not keep statistics on the community business sector of the economy and has no plans at present to collect this information. The formation of community businesses is essentially a matter for the members of the individual community.

Co-operative Sector

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the main types of organisation involved in the co-operative, mutual and non-profit sectors of the economy; what comparisons by size he has made between those sectors with the company sector for comparable industrial and commercial categories including banking, insurance and retailing; what action the Government are taking to foster and develop the co-operative, mutual and non-profit section of the economy; and if he will make a statement. [26925]

Mr. Page: The main types of organisations involved in the co-operative, mutual and non-profit sectors of the economy are building societies, friendly societies, credit unions and industrial and provident societies. Directly comparable figures for this sector and for company sectors in similar categories are not available.

As part of the deregulation initiative, the Government have reviewed the legislation governing the activities of building societies, industrial and provident societies, credit unions and friendly societies. New draft legislation

for building societies is proposed for early in the next Session, which will allow them to operate more flexibly and to offer a wide range of products and services. Amendments to legislation governing industrial and provident societies, credit unions and friendly societies will be laid before Parliament on 26 June under the order-making power of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994.

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to fund innovative co-operative projects along the lines of those provided in the three years following the demise of the co-operative development agency; what funding is available for this type of project in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement. [26927]

Mr. Page: My Department supported projects to the value of over £100,000 in 1993–94. There are no plans to fund development projects specifically related to co-operative businesses in the current financial year.

Local Enterprise Agencies

Mr. Purchase: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assistance is being provided through the offices of the local enterprise agencies to the development of the co-operative form of enterprise; what contacts exist between the local enterprise agencies and co-operative development agencies; and what action the Government are taking to ensure that those providing information and advice on the setting up of new business are aware of the co-operative alternative and can provide such information and advice where that is appropriate or requested; and if he will make a statement. [26918]

Mr. Page: Local enterprise agencies advise start-up businesses about the opportunities available to them locally. This will include access to finance, counselling, training and impartial advice on a range of subjects including the co-operative form of enterprise.

The network of enterprise agencies has local links with co-operative development agencies. Individuals seeking self-employment may be referred from one to the other. A number of co-operative development agencies also operate as local enterprise agencies in their own right.

My Department has funded the development of a resource pack related to co-operatives for business advisers working with micro-businesses. It is being disseminated through a number of regional seminars to which the main providers of information and advice, business links, training and enterprise councils and enterprise agencies, have been invited.

Recorded Deliveries

Mr. Watson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many Post Office recorded delivery *(a)* letters and *(b)* packages were lost or failed to reach their destination in (i) the United Kingdom and (ii) Scotland, for each of the last three years. [26588]

Mr. Page: The Post Office tells me that this information is not available. Recorded delivery items travel with first and second class post and are segregated only at the point of delivery so that a signature can be obtained. Details of inquiries and complaints about recorded delivery items are not recorded separately but are held with queries about standard postal services.

Oil Exploration, Falkland Islands

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what information he has on negotiations between British Gas and YPF for oil exploration and exploitation in waters around the Falkland Islands; and if he will make a statement. [27257]

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* None.

ENVIRONMENT

Rural White Paper

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what powers local authorities have to impose *(a)* an operational tie and *(b)* other restrictions on occupancy where these did not exist previously; what changes have been made in these powers since 1987; and what representations he has received on this subject in the context of the forthcoming rural White Paper. [26641]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 enables the local planning authority to impose conditions on the grant of planning permission—similar powers were contained in the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 which preceded this legislation. Our policy on planning conditions is contained in Department of the Environment circular 1/85—Welsh Office 1/85. Among other things, this makes it clear that conditions should be imposed only where they are necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development to be permitted, precise, and reasonable in all other respects.

Additional guidance on the use of conditions in respect of agricultural and forestry dwellings is contained in annex E to planning policy guidance note 7: "The Countryside and the Rural Economy". This explains that when granting permission for a new agricultural dwelling, local planning authorities may impose an occupancy condition not only on the dwelling itself but on any existing dwellings on the unit which are under the control of the applicant, do not have occupancy conditions, and need at the time of the application to be used in connection with the farm. Such a condition may help to protect the countryside against the risk of pressure for new houses.

A number of responses to the rural White Paper have included comments on restrictions on occupancy.

Planning Guidance

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what guidance he gives to local authorities as to the legitimacy of planning decisions made when councillors taking part in the decision-making process had acted contrary to the common law principles of natural justice; [27022]

(2) what guidance he gives to local authorities as to the legitimacy of planning decisions made when councillors taking part in the decision-making process had acted contrary to guidance contained in DOE circular 8/90 "The National Code of Local Government Conduct". [27021]

Sir Paul Beresford: Planning policy guidance note 1 advises on the approach which decision makers should take when considering planning applications. In addition, a copy of the 1993 report, "Enquiry into the Planning System in North Cornwall District", was sent by this

Department to all English planning authorities. This gives advice on the need to follow proper procedures when dealing with planning applications and contains a summary of the sanctions available to the Secretary of State and others where national policy guidance is ignored.

Local Authority Housing

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region for each local authority *(a)* the housing revenue account subsidy in 1995–96, *(b)* the total amount of rent rebates to be paid to local authority tenants during 1995–96, *(c)* the number of local authority tenants and *(d)* the difference between the total amount of rent rebates and the housing revenue account subsidy in 1995–96; and what is this difference expressed as an amount per tenant. [27010]

Mr. Curry: I have today placed in the Library a copy of a table setting out the information requested, based on the latest estimates provided by local authorities.

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the total amount of rent rebates to be paid to local authority tenants in England in 1995–96, the total housing revenue account subsidy for local authorities in England during 1995–96, the difference between these two amounts, and this difference expressed as an amount per local authority tenant. [27009]

Mr. Curry: Based on the latest subsidy claims from local authorities, the figures are as follows:

	£
(a) Estimated cost of rent rebates in 1995–96	4,460 million
(b) Estimated Housing Revenue Account subsidy in 1995–96	4,071 million
(c) The difference between (a) and (b)	389 million
(d) The difference (c) expressed as an estimated amount per tenant	113

Local Government Finance

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list total central government financial support to *(a)* Pendle, *(b)* Bath and *(c)* Bournemouth in 1994–95. [26974]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Central Government support comprises support for capital spending as well as revenue spending. The latest available figures for 1994–95 are as follows. Differences between districts' overall level of revenue support depend on a large number of factors including the size of the tax base from which council tax can be raised, as well as the Government's assessment of relative expenditure needs.

£000's

	Pendle	*Bath*	*Bournemouth*
Revenue Support Grant	3,700	3,694	8,591
Redistributed Non-domestic Rates	2,758	2,704	5,133
Specific and Special Grants inside AEF (excluding SSA Reduction Grant)	195	247	683
SSA Reduction Grant (SSA review)	726	0	1,037
Specific and Special Grants outside of AEF	9,187	10,618	33,652
Total Revenue Support	16,566	17,263	49,096
Credit Approvals	1,246	3,422	2,489
Capital Grants	1,392	946	850
Total Central Government Support	19,204	21,631	52,435

Source:
Revenue Support items: Revised Estimates from RA96 return.
Note:
Credit Approvals and Capital Grants: most recent Capital Payments Return. The figures for credit approvals relate to basic and supplementary credit approvals issued, less receipts of specified capital grant.

Sludge

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the regulations for the application of sludge to farm land. [26939]

Mr. Atkins: The use of sewage sludge on farm land is controlled by the Sludge (Use in Agriculture) Regulations 1989, SI 1989/1263, as amended (SI 1990/880).

Departmental Budget

Mr. Trend: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what changes he proposes to make to his Department's cash and running costs limits in 1995–96. [27751]

Mr. Gummer: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary revised and supplementary estimates, the following cash and running cost limits will be revised.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 1, housing and construction, covering sections B C D and H of that vote in original estimates, will be reduced by £135,214,000 from £247,204,000 to £111,990,000. This change reflects the transfer of responsibility for net expenditure by the Energy Efficiency Office from class VII, vote 1 to class VII, vote 3.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 2, regeneration and countryside and wildlife, will be increased by £450,000 from £1,499,883,000 to £1,500,333,000. The change reflects an increase of £450,000 for the national parks supplementary grant to finance the setting up costs of the new national parks authorities which will be funded from retained PES provision.

The non-voted cash limit DOE/RCW will be increased by £1,350,000 from £1,480,883,000 to £1,482,233,000. This reflects the increase of £450,000 in class VII, vote 2 and a further increase of £900,000 in respect of non-voted derelict land grant supplementary credit approvals which were omitted from the original cash limit.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 3, environmental protection and water, will be increased by £140,214,000 from £171,321,000 to £311,535,000. The change reflects a transfer of £135,214,000 from the cash limit for class VII, vote 1 in respect of net provision for energy office expenditure; and provision of £5,000,000 to cover the initial starting up costs of the new Environment Agency.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 4, local government and planning, will be reduced by £33,000 from £30,087,143,000 to £30,087,110,000 to reflect savings in expenditure by the Valuation Office agency and valuation tribunals. The savings will be used within vote 4, to cover a residual payment of unaccompanied children grant, which is part of the non-cash-limited section of the vote.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 9, PSA Services, will be reduced by £10,534,000 from £46,905,000 to £36,371,000 and the gross running cost limit on this vote will be reduced by £12,931,000 from £52,931,000 to £40,000,000. The reduction reflects savings achieved in the residuary functions in severance figures and secondee numbers arising out of the most recent forecasts.

Increases on votes 2 and 3 will be fully offset by reductions in other cash-limited expenditure and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Second World War Bomb (Island of Portland)

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide financial assistance to Weymouth and Portland borough council under the Bellwin scheme for the costs incurred in dealing with the second world war bomb on the Island of Portland between 1 and 3 April 1995. [27841]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I am satisfied that financial assistance under the Bellwin scheme is justified given the exceptional nature of this incident. A scheme will therefore be established under section 155 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Grant will be paid to cover 85 per cent. of eligible costs which are above a threshold, and which have been incurred by Weymouth and Portland borough council in dealing with the bomb and evacuating residents from the Island of Portland between 1 and 3 April 1995.

Pollution Control

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends to make amendments to the Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations as they affect boat builders and similar industries. [27859]

Mr. Atkins: The systems of integrated pollution control and air pollution control brought in by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 have successfully taken root. The industries they regulate are set down in the prescribed processes and substances regulations.

It is important that the regulations are regularly reviewed, to take account of experience of operating the two systems, changing industrial practices, new information about the pollution potential of different industries, and the like. I have today issued a consultation paper which contains proposals for a relatively small number of adjustments to these regulations arising out of just such a review.

The consultation paper is being circulated widely to relevant industry and trade associations, local authorities, and environmental groups, with a request for comments by 21 July. I am placing a copy of the paper in the Libraries of both Houses.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he intends to revise the minimum and maximum contract periods for services subject to compulsory competitive tendering under the Local Government Act 1988. [27860]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: In August 1994, my Department issued a consultation paper inviting comment on the minimum and maximum contract periods for work then subject to the Local Government Act 1988. In it, we asked whether, in the light of experience, the existing statutory minimum and maximum contract periods need to be changed. The responses were mixed, but after careful consideration I have decided that changes to the existing contract periods are needed.

I have today issued to the local authority and trade associations for consultation a draft set of regulations which will increase the minimum and maximum contract periods for a number of defined activities subject to CCT. The new periods will apply except where the work consists wholly or mainly of work for education establishments.

The new contract periods are as follows, with old periods in brackets:

Years

	New Minimum period	*New Maximum period*
Collection of refuse	6 (5)	10 (7)
Other Cleaning	5 (4)	10 (6)
Maintenance of grounds	5 (4)	7 (5)
Repair and Maintenance of vehicles	5 (4)	7 (5)
Managing sports and leisure	5 (4)	10 (6)

There will be no change to the minimum and maximum contract periods for building cleaning, school and welfare catering or other catering services. The changes will also not affect the recently introduced new manual services or white collar services. The contract periods which will apply to contracts for work wholly or mainly at educational establishments shall be unchanged from those which previously applied to authorities with educational functions.

A number of respondents observed that it seems illogical that, for some services, shorter contract periods apply to work tendered by an authority with education functions even where the contract in question does not involve any work at an educational establishment. Therefore, separate contract periods will no longer be specified for local education authorities as a whole. Instead the shorter contract periods shall apply only to contracts consisting wholly or substantially of work for educational establishments.

There can be no doubt that longer contracts will provide a greater incentive to contractors to invest in the services which they provide and thus improve the quality of those services. They will also reduce the average cost of that investment by allowing it to be spread over a longer period. In addition, contractors have indicated that, as longer contracts are of greater value to them, they would be more likely to bid for work if contract periods were to be increased. Improved levels of competition will ensure that bids are more competitive and local authorities will have more choice in deciding who to invite to bid. The combined effect will be to improve greatly the value for money which is obtained in the provision of local authority services.

Longer contract periods will also encourage local authorities and tenderers to take a longer view when making plans for service provision. The greater stability and continuity which longer contracts provide will assist in the planning of long-term projects such as recycling schemes.

However, we do not intend to increase the minimum contract period of any service by more than one year. Instead, we propose to make significant increases to the maximum contract periods for certain services to allow local authorities the discretion to tender longer contracts where it is beneficial to do so.

These changes will not affect tenders in progress for which a tender notice specifying a contract period has already been published.

An announcement about Wales will be made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales shortly.

WALES

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) of 16 March, *Official Report*, column *692*, and the letter of 5 April placed in the Library from the chief executive of the Welsh Development Agency concerning joint venture agreements entered into by the agency (1) if he will list the total costs to public funds of those projects listed in each of the financial years given; [25295]

(2) what was the cost to public funds of agency involvement for each project listed. [25296]

Mr. Redwood: I will arrange for the chief executive of the agency to write to the hon. Member. A copy of his letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

Health Service Costs

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what were the costs of *(a)* managers, *(b)* administration and *(c)* medical staff in the health service in Wales for each year since 1979 in current prices.

Mr. Redwood: Information relating to managerial and administrative staff is not collected separately, and is shown collectively as column 1 of the following table.

Figures previously given in my reply to the hon. Gentleman on 13 December 1994 are restated, and the amount for 1992–93 in column 1 revised, due to an error in the accounts of one health authority. The adjustment has been notified and confirmed by the authority concerned.

The information is as follows:

£000

		Medical and front-line support		
	(1) Administrative and clerical	Directly employed (2) NHS staff	(3) FHSA contractual staff	(4) Total columns (2) and (3)
1979–80	27,837	159,593	27,238	186,831
1980–81	33,986	220,857	36,434	257,291
1981–82	36,702	239,751	40,921	280,672
1982–83	37,504	261,243	46,444	307,687
1983–84	42,697	278,551	50,538	329,089
1984–85	46,136	303,396	56,803	360,199
1985–86	48,130	327,455	55,020	382,475
1986–87	50,430	360,269	63,485	423,754
1987–88	57,170	408,732	70,996	479,728
1988–89	63,526	475,481	82,607	558,088
1989–90	73,630	542,564	86,186	628,750
1990–91	87,367	593,407	91,753	685,160
1991–92	107,018	626,260	121,454	747,714
1992–93	124,152	683,080	124,219	807,299
1993–94	141,321	697,545	128,429	825,974

Source:

Annual Accounts/Financial Returns of HAs, SHAs, FHSAs, NHS Trusts, and Welsh Office records.

Notes:

1. Column (1) figures include the salaries and wages of general and senior managers, and administrators and clerks in health authorities, SHAs, FHSAs and NHS trusts, including agency staff. The figures exclude the costs of GPs' administrative staff as this information is not separately collected.

2. Column (2) figures include the salaries of medical, dental, nursing, professional and technical staff employed in HAs, SHAs, FHSAs and NHS trusts. They exclude the costs of ancillary, maintenance and ambulance staff. They also include in 1993–94 £14.3 million associated with the pre-registration salary/bursary costs of nurses. In previous years these cost were reflected in health body accounts, and are in the figures above for earlier years. From 1993–94 these funds have been managed by the Welsh Office.

3. Column (3) figures include the estimated earnings of dentists, and GP's and their staff costs, (medical and administrative as information to allow splitting of these costs is not collected). Those for pharmaceutical and ophthalmic contractors cannot be disaggregated from service costs and are not included.

4. The reduction in administrative and managerial numbers in health authorities resulting form current policy will be reflected in the 1994–95 figures available shortly. Total numbers of administrative and managerial staff are now 193 below the peak level.

Retirements and Redundancies

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the annual cost to his Department of staff leaving under redundancy or early retirement schemes to incorporate (i) added years lump sum payments, (ii) redundancy payments, (iii) pension payments, including enhancements and (iv) any other special arrangements for *(a)* 1993–94, *(b)* 1994–95, *(c)* projected for 1995–96 and *(d)* projected for 1996–97. [25472]

Mr. Redwood: The costs to the Department of early retirement and redundancies are borne from the Department's running costs provision.

A detailed breakdown of the various costs could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The total costs borne on the Department's running costs in 1993–94 and 1994–95 were £100,789 and £823,558 respectively. For 1995–96, the amount is estimated at £220,000. Projections for 1996–97 will be determined during the coming public expenditure survey.

Life Styles

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what research into rural Welsh life styles his Department has commissioned since 1 January 1990. [26498]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The Welsh Office together with the Development Board for Rural Wales and the Welsh Development Agency commissioned a study on life styles in rural Wales in April 1991. The work was undertaken by Professor Paul Cloke, then of the geography department at the University College of Wales, Lampeter, and supported by a team of his colleagues. A final version of this report was presented to the Welsh Office in April 1994.

Rural Wales

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his Department's estimate of the estimated percentage of people in rural Wales living on the poverty line; and what statistics his Department publishes on these data. [26500]

Mr. Redwood: Statistics on patterns of household disposal income, for the United Kingdom as a whole, are provided in "Households Below Average Income 1979–1991/92", published in July 1994, a copy of which is in the Library. Information is not available on a regional basis.

Brock plc—Contaminated Soil

Mr. Barry Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will meet residents at Sea View farm to hear their views concerning proposals to dump contaminated soil by Brock plc. [26357]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No. Brock plc has appealed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the public inquiry is to be reconvened on 19 June. Residents should make their views known to the inspector in writing at the planning inspectorate, Welsh Office, Cathays park, Cardiff CF1 3NQ.

Staff

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the number of civil service posts, including positions in executive agencies but excluding technical appointments at grades 1 to 6 which have been advertised, together with the number of applicants, interviewees and appointees broken down to show *(a)* civil servants and (b) non-civil servants for each year from 1 January 1990 to 31 December as a whole in Wales. [26943]

Mr. Redwood: Information is not available in the form requested. I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Office of Public Service and Science on 6 June 1995 at column 138.

Draft Local Plans

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list of the draft local plans that have been submitted to his Department to date and those that he has approved. [27138]

Mr. Redwood: My Department is consulted about local plans at draft and deposit stage. To date, draft area-wide local plans have been prepared for the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire coast national parks and for the districts of Ceredigion, Colwyn, Cynon Valley, Dwyfor, Merthyr Tydfil, Montgomeryshire, Newport, Port Talbot, Radnorshire, South Pembrokeshire, Taff Ely and Torfaen. Area-wide local plans have reached deposit stage in Alyn and Deeside, Bleanau Gwent, Brecknock, Carmarthen, Cardiff, Dinefwr, Islwyn, Monmouth, Preseli Pembrokeshire, Rhondda, Rhymney Valley, Vale of Glamorgan, Wrexham Naelor and Ynys Môn. Local plans, adopted by the authorities concerned, currently cover Arfon, Blaenau Gwent, Delyn, Glyndwr, Lliw Valley, Neath, Ogwr, Rhuddlan, Rhondda, Swansea and Wrexham Maelor. In due course, some of these will be replaced by new area-wide plans.

Full monitoring of local plan preparation is carried out by the Welsh Office every six months and the results of the latest survey will be published soon.

Skills

Mr. Wigley: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on estimates of skills shortage recorded in private or public surveys which he has evaluated; what measures are being taken to tackle existing skills shortages; and if he will make a statement. [25765]

Mr. Richards: The 1994 Welsh employers survey covered nearly 3,000 employers in Wales. It found that 5 per cent. of establishments had vacancies that were hard to fill and 2 per cent had hard-to-fill vacancies due to lack of skilled applicants.

Reports of other recent surveys conducted for employers organisations suggest that the percentage of firms expecting a shortage of skilled labour to limit output is increasing. However caution must be attached to the findings of regional analyses based on small samples which are liable to significant margins of error. "People and Prosperity: and Agenda for Action in Wales" published on 20 March sets out a concerted plan of action to improve skills levels in Wales.

Privatised Utilities

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will make an order requiring British Gas, British Telecom, MANWEB, SWALEC, Dwr Cymru and other major privatised utilities to prepare schemes for the implementation of the Welsh language Act 1993, and if he will make a statement; [26552]

(2) what assessment he has made of the judgments of the House of Lords and European Court of Justice in respect of the cases of Foster and ORS *v.* British Gas (1994) ICR 84, and ORS *v.* South West Water Services Ltd. (1994) with regard to the operation of the Welsh Language Act 1993, and if he will make a statement. [26553]

Mr. Richards: It was not intended that the provisions of part II of the Welsh Language Act should be applied to the private sector. The Government remain of the view that, despite recent legal judgments, even if it is within the Secretary of State's power to specify some or all of the privatised utilities under section 6(1)(o) of the Act, those bodies should not be so specified.

However, many private companies, including privatised utilities, have produced Welsh language schemes voluntarily and in response to customer demand. The privatised utilities have, I believe, a particularly good record of operating bilingual policies successfully.

Asthma

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure on anti-asthma medication and preparations, per family health service authority, for the last two years for which figures are available. [27178]

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

£ million

Family Health Services Authority	*Expenditure 1993*	*1994*
Clwyd	3.260	3.702
Gwynedd	2.024	2.345
Powys	0.766	1.046
Dyfed	3.259	3.691
West Glamorgan	3.551	3.902
South Glamorgan	3.553	3.536
Mid Glamorgan	3.382	6.182
Gwent	3.549	3.997

These figures show expenditure on bronchodilators, inhaled corticosteroids, cromoglycate and related therapy. Some of these preparations are prescribed for indications other than asthma.

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the total expenditure per capita in Wales on anti-asthma medication and preparations for the last five years for which figures are available. [27179]

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

Year	*Total expenditure per capital £*
July-December 1989[1]	2.49
1990	5.49
1991	6.52
1992	7.63
1993	8.78
1994	9.89

[1] Information not collected prior to July 1989.

These figures show expenditure on bronchodilators, inhaled corticosteroids, cromoglycate and related therapy. Some of these preparations are prescribed for indications other then asthma.

Planning Policy Guidance

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will issue a consultative draft of new policy planning guidance notes for Wales; and if he will make a statement. [27225]

Mr. Redwood: I shall be issuing such a draft shortly.

Police Diving Teams

Mr. Gareth Wardell: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what information his Department holds on police diving teams. [27139]

Mr. Maclean: I have been asked to reply.

In connection with its responsibilities, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary holds details of the number of full-time police officers, and civilian police staff, involved in underwater search duties in each force in England and Wales.

There are 18 underwater search teams in England and Wales. Forces which do not have their own unit, or share one, may arrange for diving support to be brought in from neighbouring forces.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Intestate Estates

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many people have died intestate in the latest years for which figures are available whose estates have transferred to the Duchy of Lancaster. [26731]

Mr. David Hunt: Records are maintained by reference to the date of reporting and of closing of cases, not necessarily by reference to the date of death.

During the last three years for which figures are available, the number of intestate estates the value of which after disposal of assets was transferred to the Duchy of Lancaster, was, for the year commencing 1 October in each case:

1991–92: 148
1992–93: 148
1993–94: 131

These are also referred to as "closed cases".

The number of cases reported to the solicitor for the affairs of the Duchy of Lancaster for the same three years were:

1991–92: 425
1992–93: 421
1993–94: 388

The cases referred to as "closed" above were not necessarily included in those reported in the relevant three years.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many estates under the intestacy

provisions in the County Palatine passed to the Duchy in 1993–94 and 1994–95; and how many devolved, after investigation, to surviving blood relatives. [26725]

Mr. David Hunt: The number of estates which passed to the Duchy in 1993–94 were 131. The figures are not yet available for 1994–95.

The number of estates which devolved to surviving blood relatives—kin—in 1993–94 were 32.

These 32 estates were not necessarily reported as closed during the year 1993–94. Of the total number of cases reported in 1993–94—388—some will be included in the "closed cases" for that year; some in the cases which devolved to surviving blood relatives—kin—after administration; some would have remained under administration at the end of the year; and the balance would have been transferred to blood relatives before administration was completed.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Luff: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what proposals there are to change the 1995–96 cash limit and running costs limit for the Office of Public Service and Science. [27756]

Mr. Horam: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary supplementary estimate the cash limit for the Office of Public Service and Science—class XVIII, vote 1—will be increased by £2,123,000 from £50,590,000 to £52,713,000 and the gross running cost limit will be increased by £13,003,000 from £69,846,000 to £82,849,000. Net running costs for the Civil Service College will decrease by £1,849,000 from £1,849,000 to zero. The increases result from a transfer of civil service management of superannuation functions, and provision from Her Majesty's Treasury—class XVII, vote 1. The increase will be offset by a transfer and will not therefore add to the planned total of public expenditure.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday, 8 June 1995

TREASURY

Debtor Countries

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what estimate he has made of the cost to the Exchequer of 80 per cent. official bilateral debt write-off for all severely indebted low-income countries; [25375]

(2) what is the cost to the Exchequer of bilateral debt write-off of 67 per cent. for developing countries under the Naples terms. [25374]

Mr. Nelson: The face value of debt reduction as a result of a 67 per cent. write-off of official bilateral debt owed to ECGD and ODA by developing countries which are eligible for Naples terms would be approximately £630 million. The corresponding figure for an 80 per cent. write-off of official bilateral debt owed to ECGD and ODA by severely indebted low-income countries would be approximately £750 million.

However, these figures represent only the face value written off. Debt reduction under the Naples terms is implemented on the recognition that the beneficiaries would never have been able to pay the debt in full: 67 per cent. debt reduction reflects the ability of those countries to pay and cannot therefore be said to represent a cost to the Exchequer.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, what is the current total of outstanding debt owed to the United Kingdom by developing countries. [25377]

Mr. Nelson: The total outstanding debt owed to ECGD and the ODA by developing countries—excluding Russia and eastern Europe—is £6.4 billion.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value to the United Kingdom of debt interest payments from developing countries in 1994–95 from *(a)* payments to the Overseas Development Administration, *(b)* payments to the Export Credits Guarantee Department, *(c)* payments to the Commonwealth Development Corporation and *(d)* in total. [25378]

Mr. Nelson: Debt interest payments from developing countries—excluding Russia and eastern Europe—in 1994–95 were *(a)* ODA £6.8 million, *(b)* ECGD £150 million, *(c)* CDC £105.8 million, *(d)* total £262.6 million.

Statistics

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the price charged at current prices for a complete set of *Business Monitors* in 1979, and Prodcom statistics in 1995, to *(a)* a private company and *(b)* a public library; and what calculations have led to the difference. [26363]

Mr. Nelson: The price in 1979 for a full set of *Business Monitors*, adjusted to today's prices, was £1,430 to a private company. The price charged in 1995 for a full set of "UK Markets", a considerably expanded and more comprehensive set of reports which include trade data as well as Prodcom, is £4,950 to a private company. Sales of *Business Monitors* to public libraries in 1979 would have attracted a discount of 50 per cent. In 1995 a complete set of "UK Markets" is available to public libraries in hard copy at £4,950, but is also available on CD-ROM in a special library edition at £3,950.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if Taylor Nelson AGB plc has a monopoly on the publication of statistics; what plans he has to allow a private statistics company to produce the complete Prodcom statistics on microfiche and sell those complete tables in that medium to libraries, and if he will make a statement. [26365]

Mr. Nelson: Taylor Nelson AGB does not have a monopoly on the publication of Government or Central Statistical Office statistics. HMSO remains the major publisher of CSO data. There are currently no plans for a private sector company to release Prodcom on microfiche. It is already available in hard copy, CD-ROM and I-Fax, and plans are in hand to include it on the CSO's electronic databank. If any proposals are received they will be considered on their merits.

City Institutions (Assets)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the value of assets controlled by City institutions indicating the proportion which are British-owned and controlled. [27078]

Mr. Nelson: Information on holdings of financial assets by UK financial institutions are shown in tables 9.1E to 9.1H of *Financial Statistics*, which is available from the Library of the House.

Investment in Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update his written answer to the (then) hon. Member for Dagenham, Mr. Gould, of 28 July 1983, *Official Report*, columns *568-9*, showing the level of investment in British industry. [27128]

Mr. Nelson: Estimates at 1990 prices of capital expenditure by the industries covered by the index of industrial production[1] and by manufacturing for the years 1965 to 1994 are shown in the following table.

	£ million at 1990 prices	
Year	*IOIP industries*	*(Of which) manufacturing*
1965	18,404	10,466
1966	19,628	10,796
1967	20,017	10,583
1968	19,290	11,370
1969	19,016	12,107
1970	19,481	13,022
1971	18,138	12,190
1772	15,963	10,591
1973	16,511	10,998
1974	18,882	12,153
1975	20,326	11,214
1976	21,216	10,641
1977	20,801	11,074
1978	22,353	12,838
1979	22,298	13,558
1980	21,058	12,307
1981	18,984	9,985
1982	18,772	9,518
1983	18,661	9,413

Year	£ million at 1990 prices: IOIP industries	(Of which) manufacturing
1984	19,825	10,975
1985	21,136	12,710
1986	20,014	12,097
1987	19,843	12,641
1988	21,383	13,846
1989	23,330	14,984
1990	23,669	14,227
1991	24,516	12,803
1992	24,516	11,590
1993	24,543	10,989
1994	21,266	11,239

[1] Industry groups section C, D and E of the standard industrial classification 1992.

UK Companies (Overseas Earnings)

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, column *908*, providing information on the overseas earnings of United Kingdom companies, if he will list the corresponding net return on capital invested in each of the years in question. [27072]

Mr. Nelson: The information available is given in table:

Direct investment by United Kingdom companies overseas: Rate of return on direct investment[1]

Percentage

	Manufacturing Industry[2]	All Industries
1989	14.2	13.0
1990	13.9	12.8
1991	13.4	10.0
1992	10.9	9.2
1993	10.7	9.9

[1] Net earnings after depreciation and tax as a percentage of the outstanding level of investment in book values at the end of the relevant year. Excludes interest receipts from overseas affiliates.
[2] Classified by main industrial activity of overseas affiliate.
Source:
Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, column *908*, relating to the overseas earnings of UK companies, if he will publish the corresponding figures for 1979 and 1970. [26929]

Mr. Nelson: The information available is given in the table. Prior to 1984 the earnings from direct investment overseas by oil companies are not available, hence figures for all industries cannot be given.

Direct investment by UK companies overseas: net earnings [1]

£ million

	Manufacturing Industry[2]
1970	350
1979	1,597

[1] Earnings from branches, subsidiaries and associate companies. Earnings are defined as profits net of losses, plus interest receipts net of claims.
[2] Classified by main industrial activity of overseas affiliate.
Source:
Central Statistical Office.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, column *908*, on the overseas earnings of UK companies, if he will publish the corresponding figures and rates of return on domestic investment distinguishing between *(a)* manufacturing and *(b)* other companies. [26928]

Mr. Nelson: No corresponding figures and rates of return are available for domestic investment. However information on rates of return on capital employed are published in the annual CSO First Release [CSO(94)205] "Profitability of UK Companies", last published on 30 September 1994, a copy of which is available in the Library.

Investment

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 22 July 1982, *Official Report*, columns *291-92*, if he will update the table showing gross and net investment for the whole economy and for manufacturing industry together with undistributed profits. [27125]

Mr. Nelson: The latest estimates of gross and net investment for the whole economy and for manufacturing industry, together with undistributed profits, are shown in the following table.

Percentage of gross national product[1]

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979
Whole economy										
Gross domestic fixed capital formation										
All assets	18.6	18.7	18.3	19.5	20.5	19.7	19.3	18.5	18.3	18.5
Plant and machinery	7.0	6.8	6.2	6.5	6.7	6.3	6.6	6.6	6.8	6.8
Net domestic fixed capital formation										
All assets	9.8	9.5	8.9	9.8	9.9	8.8	8.3	7.2	6.9	7.1
Manufacturing industries[2]										
Gross domestic fixed capital formation	3.9	3.6	3.0	3.0	3.5	3.2	3.0	3.2	3.5	3.5
Net domestic fixed capital formation	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Industrial and commercial companies										
Undistributed profits	8.8	9.3	10.4	12.5	11.9	10.0	11.6	12.3	12.3	13.1

[1] Gross national product (GNP) at market prices has been used as the denominator for investment percentages and GNP at factor cost for the calculation related to undistributed profits.
[2] Manufacturing is defined as all industries which contribute to Section D of the Standard Industrial Classification 1992.

Percentage of gross national product[1]

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994
Whole economy															
Gross domestic fixed capital formation															
All assets	17.9	16.1	16.0	15.8	16.7	16.9	16.7	17.6	19.2	20.3	19.5	17.0	15.6	15.0	14.6
Plant and Machinery	6.5	5.9	5.8	5.8	6.1	6.6	6.3	6.3	6.6	7.0	6.7	6.0	5.7	5.6	5.6
Net domestic fixed capital formation															
All assets	5.9	3.8	4.0	4.1	5.0	5.2	5.1	6.3	8.2	9.4	8.4	5.9	5.0	4.7	n/a
Manufacturing industries[2]															
Gross domestic fixed capital formation	3.2	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.9	2.6	2.6	2.6	2.7	2.6	2.3	2.0	1.9	1.9
Net domestic fixed capital formation	n/a	n/a	-0.5	-0.5	-0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.0	-0.2	-0.2	n/a
Industrial and Commercial Companies															
Undistributed profits	9.3	9.1	9.1	10.1	11.1	11.2	10.3	11.7	11.3	9.2	7.8	7.3	7.2	9.6	11.3

[1] Gross national product (GNP) at market prices has been used as the denominator for investment percentages and GNP at factor cost for the calculation related to undistributed profits.
[2] Manufacturing is defined as all industries which contribute to Section D of the Standard Industrial Classification 1992.

Public Access Arrangements

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many owners of land in Lancashire which is conditionally exempt from inheritance tax by virtue of agreed public access arrangements have agreed with the appropriate heritage advisory agencies that access arrangements in *(a)* should be notified to the local tourist office and town hall, *(b)* should be publicised by notice or the perimeter of the land itself and *(c)* are not required to be publicised because public access is already widely known. [26976]

Sir George Young: All six owners of land in Lancashire which is currently conditionally exempt from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax are required to publicise the arrangements for public access to their land as agreed with the appropriate heritage advisory agency.

The heritage advisory agencies discuss with each owner the appropriate level and nature of publicity. Each case is considered individually and all relevant factors, including the existing level of publicity, are taken into account. Although the extent of public access may already be widely known—for example, where substantial public access is already giventhe owner will normally be required to ensure due publicity for the agreed access arrangements, where appropriate, by advertising the access arrangements in a local tourist office or town hall. For new designations of scenic land in England, owners are required to display at all points of entry on to their land map boards showing the agreed public access.

I am unable to provide more specific information as this would help to identify individual cases of tax exemption, thus compromising the normal rules on taxpayer confidentiality.

Credit Unions

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what action is being taken to establish a voluntary share protection scheme for credit unions; what consultation or discussion with credit unions and their promoting bodies has taken place on the need to provide this additional protection for members; and if he will make a statement. [26915]

Mr. Nelson: Section 16 of the Credit Unions Act 1979 gives unions the power to set up or join a share protection scheme, to protect members in the event of the collapse of their union. Any such scheme must be approved by the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, but he has no statutory power to require that one be set up.

With the growth of the movement in recent years, there should now be sufficient resources within the sector to support a scheme. The Registry of Friendly Societies has strongly encouraged the establishment of one covering all credit unions. The registry is currently in discussions with credit unions' promoting bodies and is offering them its help and advice.

Privatisation

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the nationalised industries that have been privatised since 1979; and if he will calculate the total revenue the Government has received from the sale of, and in taxation from, each of the privatised companies since their privatisation. [27263]

Sir George Young: For a list of privatisations and the gross equity proceeds from each, I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave on 30 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *758*. Details of the tax affairs of each company cannot be made public without the prior approval of that company. However, in total, privatised companies paid about £50 million per week in tax in 1994–95.

Inheritance Tax

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to raise the limit below which delivery of an inheritance tax account is not required for administering a deceased person's estate. [27983]

Sir George Young: The Inland Revenue has today laid regulations increasing the limit from £125,000 to £145,000. The increased limit will come into operation on 1 July 1995 for estates of persons dying on or after 6 April 1995. It will simplify the administration of some 7,500 estates.

Income Tax

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer—what are his latest estimates for *(a)* the south-east and *(b)* Greater London for (i) the number of income taxpayers, (ii) the number of income taxpayers with gross earnings above £70,000, (iii) the number of income taxpayers with gross earnings above £80,000 and (iv) the number of income taxpayers with gross earnings above £100,000. [25951]

Sir George Young *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* The table provides estimates for 1992–93, the latest

available year for which information can be provided below the United Kingdom level.

Thousands

	South East	Greater London
Number of income taxpayers	8,440	3,190
Number with gross earnings over £70,000	90	47
Number with gross earnings over £80,000	70	39
Number with gross earnings over £100,000	46	27

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

British Coal Loans

Mr. Hain: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish a table of loans made by British Coal for each year between 1985 and 1993. [26994]

Mr. Page: British Coal makes loans to its employees and to members of the corporation, and to its wholly owned subsidiary undertakings—the latter with the consent of the Secretary of State and the approval of the Treasury. The aggregate outstanding balances on these loans are published in the corporation's report and accounts, copies of which are available in the Library of the House.

Newspaper Carriage Charges

Mr. Madden: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many newsagents have referred to arbitration carriage charges levied by news wholesalers; what was the outcome in each case; and if he will make a statement. [27032]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: An appeals system to consider disputes between retailers and newspaper wholesalers concerning serious breaches of terms and conditions of supply has been established voluntarily by the industry. Information about cases handled may be obtained from the Association of Newspaper and Magazine Wholesalers.

Export Unit Values

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 3 April, *Official Report*, columns *902–3*, concerning the percentage change in United Kingdom export unit values relative to those of the Six, if he will publish the corresponding figures *(a)* the non-EEC countries and *(b)* the other EEC countries. [26559]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The information requested relating to non-EEC countries is given in the table. Unit value indices for manufactured goods are only readily available for those EEC countries listed in table D6 of the *Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics*, a copy of which is available in the Library of the House.

Percentage change on previous quarter in UK export unit values relative to those of the non-EEC countries[1]

	Change on previous quarter
1987q1	5.5
1987q2	3.5
1987q3	–0.7
1987q4	5.6
1988q1	1.6
1988q2	0.0
1988q3	–4.0
1988q4	2.6
1989q1	–3.5
1989q2	–4.4
1989q3	0.2
1989q4	–0.6
1990q1	2.2
1990q2	2.2
1990q3	5.9
1990q4	1.2
1991q1	–0.2
1991q2	–7.0
1991q3	0.9
1991q4	3.2
1992q1	0.0
1992q2	1.5
1992q3	2.1
1992q4	–12.2
1993q1	2.3
1993q2	2.7
1993q3	1.5
1993q4	1.0
1994q1	–2.9
1994q2	0.4
1994q3	n/a
1994q4	n/a

[1] US, Japan, Canada, Sweden and Switzerland. 1. Unit value indices in US$ for EEC(6) are weighted together using total trade weights. 2. n/a—not available.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27279]

Mr. Ian Taylor: In addition to their statutory entitlements, permanent employees within DTI and its agencies with over year's service are entitled to enhanced levels of maternity leave up to a total of 52 weeks. They are also entitled to a period of 14 weeks' maternity leave at full pay, which includes statutory maternity pay, subject to returning to work for a month after maternity leave. Other entitlements for women include time off to attend ante natal appointments and the right to apply for a career break of up to five years to care for her child/children.

Fathers employed by DTI and its agencies are entitled to take two days paid paternity leave at the time of the birth or during the weeks following the birth of the child.

The Department's maternity and paternity entitlements and those of its agencies are based on the civil service management code.

Non-fossil Fuel Obligation

Mr. Simpson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade at what rate funding for renewables will continue under the non-fossil fuel obligation when the nuclear industry is privatised. [27132]

Mr. Eggar: Renewables will continue to be funded through the fossil fuel levy. The amount of this support will reflect the excess cost above the pool price to the

regional electricity companies of renewables-sourced electricity generated within the non-fossil fuel obligation. This support is likely to build up over the next few years to a maximum of about £150 million annually.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) how much the proposed new privatised nuclear power company will be required to set aside annually to meet the eventual costs of decommissioning the pressurised water reactor and advanced gas cooled reactor power stations; [25288]

(2) how much the proposed privatised nuclear power company will be required to set aside for the long term storage of the nuclear waste produced by its reactors. [25289]

Mr. Eggar *[holding answer 22 May 1995]:* The Government will ask all nuclear operators to draw up strategies for decommissioning their redundant plant. The Government have made it clear that the privatised nuclear generators will have to meet their obligations in respect of all their long-term nuclear liabilities, including those for decommissioning, in full and that they should make sufficient financial provision to do so. The Government believe that segregated funds are the best way of ensuring public confidence that the nuclear generators will meet their obligations and will consider carefully the detailed implications of this approach. The privatised generators will need to satisfy their auditors that sufficient cash is placed in these funds for each year. The precise level of the liabilities to be met will be a matter for the companies and their auditors in due course.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Income Support

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many persons were in receipt of income support in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale districts for each year since 1992. [26570]

Mr. Roger Evans: The administration of income support is a matter for Mr. Ian Magee, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ian Magee to Mr. Gordon Prentice, dated 7 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply your recent Parliamentary Question about the number of persons in receipt of Income Support in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale districts for each year since 1992.

I have provided, at Annex A, the quarterly figures and the annual average figures since 1992 in the Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale District.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Income support recipients—Burnley, Pendle and Rossendale district

	Quarter ending 31 May	*Quarter ending 31 August*	*Quarter ending 30 November*	*Quarter ending 28 February*	*Annual average*
1992–93	22,654	23,760	23,336	25,162	23,728
1993–94	24,988	25,540	24,421	24,744	24,923
1994–95	24,949	25,633	24,560	25,153	25,074

Data is provisional and subject to amendment.

Frozen Pensions

Mr. David Nicholson: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report*, column *273*, which country initiated negotiations for the agreements of 1975 and 1979 with *(a)* Spain and *(b)* Portugal; what reasons were given for the initial approach; and what estimates he has of the current number of Spanish and Portuguese retired citizens in the United Kingdom whose pensions are paid by their Governments. [26373]

Mr. Arbuthnot: At the request of Her Majesty's Government, a Spanish delegation met UK officials in February 1956 with a view to negotiating a social security agreement between the two countries to protect the benefit rights of migrant workers moving from one country to the other and to ensure that they pay into only one country's social security scheme. Negotiations ceased in 1960 and subsequently resumed again in 1971. The agreement with the Spanish Government was signed on 13 September 1974. On 1 December 1976 the Portuguese Government requested the negotiation of a social security agreement along the lines of that between the UK and Spain. The number of retired Spanish and Portuguese citizens in the UK whose pensions are paid by their Governments is not known.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27280]

Mr. Hague: Subject to the conditions set out in the civil service management code, permanent staff and staff on fixed-term appointments of two years or more are entitled to three calendar months and one week paid maternity leave if monthly paid, or 14 weeks if weekly paid. This will include entitlement to statutory maternity pay.

Paid maternity leave may be followed by an optional period of unpaid leave which, together with the paid leave, cannot exceed 52 weeks in total.

Casual staff and staff on fixed term appointments of less than two years are entitled to 14 weeks' unpaid maternity leave plus an optional period of four weeks unpaid special leave.

Where an officer is not entitled to paid maternity leave she may nevertheless qualify for statutory maternity pay.

All staff are allowed paid time off for ante-natal care.

Fathers are allowed two days' paid paternity leave at the time of the birth or at a later date if this is more helpful. This can be increased to a maximum of 10 days when there are medical complications or acute domestic difficulties in caring for other children in the household.

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the occasions in the last 12 months when answers to hon. Members given at Prime Minister's Question Time were subsequently corrected or otherwise qualified. [26970]

The Prime Minister: I have answered in excess of 750 questions during Prime Minister's Question Time over the last 12 months. My records show that I have subsequently clarified three answers by means of written questions.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27284]

Mr. John M. Taylor: In addition to the statutory maternity leave and statutory maternity pay entitlements, women with one year's service at the start of their maternity leave who state their intention to return to work after their babies are born are entitled to 14 weeks' maternity leave on full pay and a period of unpaid maternity leave thereafter, up to a total maximum absence of 52 weeks. They return to work on no less favourable terms than these enjoyed prior to their maternity leave.

Women with 40 weeks' service by the expected date of birth, who qualify for statutory maternity leave—of 14 weeks—and statutory maternity pay, are given the option to extend their period of absence by four weeks, to enable them to benefit from the full entitlement to 18 weeks' statutory maternity pay. They, too, return to work on no less favourable terms than those held prior to their maternity leave.

Fathers are entitled to two days' paternity leave and there are provisions for staff to apply for additional paid and unpaid special leave for compassionate or domestic reasons. Staff with dependant care responsibilities may apply for a career break of 12 months, renewable on an annual basis to a total of five years if required, because of genuine family reasons or difficulties.

The above arrangements currently apply throughout the Lord Chancellor's Department, including the Court Service and the Public Trust Office.

Victims' Relatives

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how he communicates to the families of victims their right to be seated in the well of the court rather than in the public gallery. [27276]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from M. D. Huebner to Mrs. Barbara Roche, dated 8 June 1995:

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your Question about the right of families of victims to be seated in the well of the court.

I should first explain that the Prosecution is responsible for contacting victims of crime and their families. There is no "right" for anyone other than those actively taking part in the hearing to be seated in the well of the court. However, if the judge considers it appropriate, a relative of a victim may be allowed to sit in the well of the court. In addition, court staff may be able to make arrangements to seat the relatives of victims away from the other side in the case.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Attorney General what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27285]

The Attorney-General: Entitlements are available in accordance with the civil service management code. They provide for:

Reasonable paid time off for ante-natal care.

A maximum of 52 weeks paid and unpaid maternity leave for permanent staff[1] with one year's service who state an intention to return to work. Of this, three months and one week[2] will be paid leave.

Staff may also apply for an unpaid career break of up to 5 years.

Other staff, regardless of employment status, are entitled to 14 weeks' unpaid maternity leave and to return to work.

Staff[3] are entitled to two days' paid paternity leave.

[1] Excluding casual staff and those on fixed-term appointments of less than two years.
[2] 14 weeks if paid weekly.
[3] Other than those on temporary appointments of less than two years in the Treasury Solicitor's Department.

SCOTLAND

Scottish Homes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has for further measures to require Scottish Homes to be more accountable to its tenants; and if he will make a statement. [24064]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has no plans for further measures to require Scottish Homes to be more accountable to its tenants.

Within its objective of contributing to improved quality in housing and its management, Scottish Homes has finalised its tenant participation policy, which was developed with the assistance of tenants. The policy encourages increasing involvement of tenants in the management of their own homes. Scottish Homes has also issued a revised tenants handbook and is establishing a panel with tenant representation to review the effectiveness of communication with tenants.

Crofting

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual administrative running costs of the Crofters Commission, including its share of the cost of administering the crofting agriculture scheme, the township development scheme, the various livestock schemes and the building grants and loan scheme. [26344]

Sir Hector Monro: The Crofters Commission's approved running costs budget for 1995–96, including the

cost of administering the crofting counties agricultural grants scheme and the township development scheme, is £1.444 million. The commission has no involvement in the administration of the crofters building grants and loans scheme or the livestock improvement schemes for crofters.

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the annual administrative cost of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries of (i) the crofting agricultural loan scheme, (ii) the crofting township development scheme, (iii) the crofting building grant and loan scheme (iv) the livestock improvement scheme. [26343]

Sir Hector Monro: The estimated cost to the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department in 1994–95 of administering crofting schemes is set out in the table.

Scheme	*Administrative cost £000*
Crofting counties agricultural grants scheme	680
Crofting township development scheme	2
Crofters building grants and loans scheme	870
Livestock improvement schemes	330

Mr. Macdonald: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of applications under the crofting agricultural grants scheme for projects not requiring prior approval and the number of applications for comparable projects in each year since 1991–92. [26382]

Sir Hector Monro: The information requested is set out in the table.

Financial year	*Number of applicants claiming grant*
1991–92	2,731
1992–93	2,688
1993–94[1]	2,537
1994–95[2]	2,334

[1] Applications for assistance towards cost of improving virgin hill land not accepted after 1 April 1993.
[2] Minimum level of claims increased from £100 to £500 with effect from 15 April 1994.

Local Enterprise Companies

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what progress has been made on the proposed boundary changes for local enterprise companies with particular reference to Dumbartonshire Enterprise. [26858]

Mr. Kynoch: As the hon. Member knows from my letter of 31 May, my right hon. Friend announced his decision on local enterprise company boundaries on 31 May. A copy of his statement has been placed in the Library of the House.

Primary School Closures

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what criteria are used to decide whether to close a small primary school. [26856]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Such decisions will depend on the merits of individual proposals.

Heart Disease

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* cases of heart disease and *(b)* deaths due to heart disease were recorded for each year since 1990. [27214]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of recorded deaths in Scotland from heart disease in the years in question were as follows:

1990: 19,798
1991: 19,598
1992: 19,336
1993: 19,922
1994: 17,922

Information on heart disease morbidity is not available. Data are however, held on hospital admissions. The information for the period requested is set out for both admissions and cases since an individual patient can be admitted more than once during the year.

Year	*Hospital admissions*	*Cases*
1990	68,024	42,120
1991	73,791	44,156
1992	78,718	46,031
1993	82,228	48,039
1994	[1]83,781	n/a

[1] Provisional.
n/a=not available.

Offshore Oil Installations

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the consequences for fishing of the disposal by Shell of the Brent Spar in the North sea. [25822]

Sir Hector Monro: The site selected for the disposal operation is in the north-east Atlantic in an area where the water is over 2,300 m deep. This is well beyond the current limit of deep-water trawling activity and hence disposal at this location will not present a hazard to fishing.

Environmental Education

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on his policy for environmental education. [28002]

Mr. Lang: The working group on environmental education chaired by Professor John Smyth reported to me in April 1993, making more than 90 recommendations for action by a wide range of organisations in Scotland. The report set out a strategy for taking forward environmental education in Scotland over the next 10 years. Public consultation following the report overwhelmingly endorsed the proposals made.

One of the central recommendations was that there should be a national advisory panel. I am pleased that the advisory group on sustainable development has accepted my invitation to provide that central point around which environmental education can develop in Scotland, offering advice and targets for others to take up. This is an important initiative enabling environmental education to provide a significant tool with which to achieve our primary objectives for sustainable development.

I am today publishing "A Scottish Strategy for Environmental Education" which commends "Learning for Life" to all seeking a guide as to my policy on

environmental education. I intend to adopt it as the foundation on which developments in my policy will be based, recognising that some of the recommendations within it may not be feasible or necessarily appropriate to implement immediately. I shall expect all organisations for which I have responsibility to have regard to its advice on environmental education. I will place copies of the publication in the House Library.

Charity Funds

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he intends to lay regulations before Parliament in respect of section 12 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990. [27254]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Regulations in respect of section 12 are in the course of preparation and will shortly be laid before Parliament.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the amount spent by the Scottish Office in regional selective assistance for each financial year since 1979–80. [25347]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 23 May 1995]:* The available information relates to payments to companies with projects in Scotland. For earlier years, this is published in the *Scottish Economic Bulletin*, copies of which are available in the Library. Expenditure in 1994–95 amounted to £77.1 million.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27293]

Mr. Horam: My right hon. Friend is responsible for the Office of Public Service and Science, its agencies, Her Majesty's Stationery Office and the Central Office of Information. Each of these departments follows the relevant chapters of the civil service management code in respect of maternity and paternity entitlements. Copies of the code are available in the House Library. Maternity arrangements are provided in conjunction with the statutory entitlements available.

TRANSPORT

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27278]

Mr. Norris: The main maternity benefits provided by the Department depend on the individual's length of service. Women are allowed 18 to 52 weeks' maternity leave. The first 18 weeks are paid at normal or statutory maternity pay rates as appropriate.

All have the right to return to work at the end of their maternity leave. In addition, while at work, they are allowed paid time off to attend any necessary medical appointments.

Men are currently allowed two days' paid paternity leave.

In all, the arrangements are in line with legislation and Treasury guidance.

Vehicle Testing, Hampshire

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many officers responsible for enforcing heavy goods vehicle legislation are employed in Hampshire; [27143]

(2) how many heavy goods vehicles were inspected in roadside checks in Hampshire in each year since 1979; [27144]

(3) how many inspections of MOT testing stations were conducted in Hampshire; and how many testing stations were operating in each year since 1979; [27145]

(4) how many inspections of public service vehicles were conducted in Hampshire; and how many public service vehicles were operating in Hampshire in each year since 1979. [27146]

Mr. Norris: This information is not available in the form requested.

Rail Closures

Mr. Meacher: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many lines intended for closure British Rail is currently running with only a limited service of a few trains a day which otherwise would be subject to the formal closure process; and if he will list the lines involved. [27190]

Mr. Watts: British Rail is currently operating the following limited services for which statutory closure procedures are likely to begin in the near future: Derby to Sinfin and Watford junction to Croxley Green. The Croxley Green branch is subject to a major development proposal linking it to the LT Metropolitan line Watford branch to provide through Metropolitan services to Watford junction.

Public Weighbridges

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the average capital and net revenue cost to his Department of providing a public weighbridge. [27147]

Mr. Norris: The cost of providing a public weighbridge is £60,000 with running costs of £5,000 per annum.

Port Waste Facilities

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans his Department has to improve port waste reception facilities. [26116]

Mr. Norris: My Department is currently consulting interested bodies on a number of measures to improve port waste reception facilities, including financial mechanisms to encourage use, improved communications between the users and providers of facilities and measures to aid the enforcement of vessels which do not make appropriate use of waste reception facilities.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many ships annually used United Kingdom port

facilities; and how much each port charges for the use of its facilities. [26113]

Mr. Norris: A total of 144,919 ships arrived at UK ports in 1993. Information on their use of port waste reception facilities is not available; nor is information on the charges levied by individual ports for the use of such facilities.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what was the result of research conducted on the issues raised by the Donaldson report referred to in the press notice No. 055 of 28 February on port waste reception facilities. [26115]

Mr. Norris: The Department of Transport's research has shown that while port waste reception facilities are generally adequate to meet the UK's international commitments, there is scope for improvement in the planning and organisation of facilities. This research has formed the basis of a consultation exercise with interested parties to consider how waste reception facilities could be improved, in the light of the recommendations of the report of Lord Donaldson's inquiry.

Marine Pollution

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his Department's estimate of the amount of illegal discharges made by ships into the North sea for the last 10 years *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding accidental discharges. [26112]

Mr. Norris: The information is not available in the form requested.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, what proposals the United Kingdom Government will put forward or support at the forthcoming North sea ministerial conference in relation to controlling non-accidental pollution from ships with particular reference to oil. [26114]

Mr. Norris: In addition to a number of proposals on marine pollution generally, the Government will put forward and support specific proposals on the designation of the North sea as a special area for oil discharges under annex I of the international convention on the prevention of pollution from ships 1973–78 and on the improvement of the availability and quality of port waste reception facilities for oily wastes.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how his Department intends to police the limits of discharge by ships set by the amendments to annexe 1 of MARPOL 73/78 in 1992. [26117]

Mr. Norris: Port state control inspectors assess discharges of oil by studying oil record books and quantities of oil on board vessels. Inspectors also inspect oil pollution prevention equipment and the ability of ships' staff to use it correctly, when carrying out port state control inspections of foreign vessels and general inspections of UK vessels.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Library Services

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when he intends to issue his response to the KPMG/capital planning report on library services; and if the report itself will be published. [26734]

Mr. Sproat: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that my right hon. Friend gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford on Avon (Mr. Howarth) on 16 May 1995, *Official Report*, columns *150–51*, referring to the KPMG contracting out study. No decision has yet been made about the handling of the study, but we expect to make a further statement in due course.

Cable Television, Thurrock

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage when cable television franchises will be able to offer a service to areas in Thurrock; and if he will make a statement. [27342]

Mr. Dorrell: United Artists Communications holds the Thames estuary north cable television franchise, which includes the Thurrock area. Construction is in progress, but is a time-consuming process. I understand that the franchise holder has not yet announced a target date for providing a service in Thurrock.

Royal Palaces (Admission Charges)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how much was raised from admission charges to Windsor castle and Buckingham palace in 1994. [26971]

Mr. Sproat: The royal collection is responsible for visitor admissions and the related income and expenditure for Buckingham palace and Windsor castle. The royal collection is a department of the royal household and is not a responsibility of my Department.

However, I understand that gross income, excluding VAT, from admission charges in the year to 31 March 1995 for Windsor castle, including precincts, state apartments and St. George's chapel, was £5,309,000 and for Buckingham palace state apartments was £2,662,000, in both cases subject to audit. Audited figures and further explanation will be provided in the annual report of the royal collection trust which will be available in early July.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what maternity and paternity entitlements are available for employees within his Department. [27283]

Mr. Dorrell: The maternity and paternity entitlements available to employees of my Department are consistent with the provisions of the civil service management code, copies of which are held in the House Library. A woman who satisfies the criteria set out in chapter 5 of the code is entitled to three months and one week's paid maternity leave. She is also entitled to a period of unpaid maternity leave; the total of paid and unpaid maternity leave should not normally exceed 52 weeks. All permanent male staff in the Department are entitled to two days' paid paternity leave, as outlined in chapter 3.1 of the code. These maternity and paternity provisions will be incorporated into the departmental staff handbook in due course.

Churchill Papers

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what agreement has been reached with the Churchill family on the circumstances in which they can raise their fees for the reproduction of the documents purchased by the National Heritage Memorial Fund. [27339]

Mr. Dorrell: No agreement has been reached with the Churchill Archive Settlement Trust on reproduction fees since these are always a matter for the individual copyright owner.

National Lottery

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will publish, for each of the countries of the United Kingdom and for the United Kingdom as a whole, his estimate of *(a)* total receipts of the national lottery and *(b)* proceeds of the Treasury tax on the national lottery receipts. [25679]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* The total receipts of the national lottery to date stand at £2099.2 million. The proceeds of Treasury tax on the national lottery receipts to date stand at £201 million. These figures are available only for the United Kingdom as a whole.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Metropolitan Police (Overtime)

Mr. Straw: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the effect of overtime restrictions on the operation of specialist squads of the Metropolitan police, with particular reference to the drug squad and flying squad. [27189]

Mr. Maclean: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that no special overtime restrictions have been applied to these specialist squads. However, they are, of course, required to operate within their agreed overall budget for the financial year. Action against drug-related violence, street and commercial crime and burglary are all specific objectives for the Metropolitan police and will continue to receive priority for resources within the overall budget for the force.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27286]

Mr. Howard: Chapters 3.1 and 5 of the leave section of the civil service management code—a copy of which is in the Library—set out the paternity and maternity arrangements and entitlements available to staff in the Home Office. These arrangements are provided in conjunction with the statutory entitlements.

Prisoners (Home Leave)

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners from HMP Holloway and HMP Styal were granted home leave in each complete month of 1995. [26891]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Dr. Lynne Jones, dated 8 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about how many prisoners from Holloway and Styal prisons were granted home leave in each complete month of this year.

Home leave, as such, has not occurred since 24 April when the systems of temporary absence were revised and figures for this period are not yet available. The available information is on the table below:

Prisoners granted home leave from Holloway and Styal, January to April 1995

	Holloway	*Styal*
January	4	7
February	2	3
March	0	4
April	1	0

Radio Phone-in Programmes

Mr. Whittingdale: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is his policy towards convicted prisoners participating in radio phone-in programmes; [22770]

(2) if he will undertake an inquiry into the participation of Mr. Jeremy Bamber in a radio phone-in programme on Talk Radio UK; and if he will make a statement. [22769]

Mr. Michael Forsyth *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* I do not think it appropriate for prisoners to participate in radio phone-in programmes. I share my hon. Friend's concern that Jeremy Bamber was allowed to do so. I have asked the Director General of the Prison Service to take immediate steps to change the appropriate standing order and governors will be advised that any breach by prisoners will be contrary to these regulations and will lead to disciplinary action.

I am very concerned about the inappropriate use of telephones by inmates and have asked the Prison Service to take action. New technology which will allow prisoners to access only approved telephone numbers is about to be tested and, if effective, will be introduced throughout the prison system.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart Interviews

Mr. Rooney: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many restart interviews were conducted in each year from 1988–89 to 1994–95 for Great Britain and in each standard region; and as a result of these how many claimants *(a)* were placed directly in a job, *(b)* claimed other benefits, *(c)* entered his Department's programmes or (d) signed off from claiming benefit. [26616]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. G. Johnson to Mr. Terry Rooney, dated 6 June 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me, in the absence of the Chief Executive, to reply to your question regarding Restart Interviews from 1988–89 to 1994–95.

I have set out the information you have requested in the attached tables. You will wish to note however, that information on people who sign off from claiming benefit for reasons other than those in the three listed categories of total Restart Interviews, job placings and programme starts, has been collected only since 1990/91 and

covers only those cases where a direct connection between the interview and the client leaving unemployment can be demonstrated.

It may be helpful if I explain the scope and purpose of the Restart Interviews which are offered at regular six monthly intervals as part of an advisory and information service aimed at helping people back into work. These interviews provide clients with the opportunity to discuss with a Client Adviser the steps they are taking to find work, how to access the employment and training opportunities that are available to them and the course of action which, if followed, will offer the best prospects of returning to work.

While the primary aim of this service is to help people back into work, advisers also have a duty to make sure those claiming benefit understand and comply with the conditions under which they are paid. These conditions require people to be available to start work immediately; not to place such restrictions on the work they are willing to do as to leave them with no real prospects of finding a job; and to take those steps, each week, which offer the best prospects of obtaining work.

As part of this process, advisers ensure that people are claiming the most appropriate benefit. If, during an interview, discussions between the client and the adviser identify that an alternative benefit is more appropriate, then the adviser will ensure a smooth transition to the correct benefit.

I should emphasise that the figures shown in the tables represent only the immediate result of Restart interviews. Many other people subsequently take up a job or a place on an employment or training programme as a result of the guidance given to them at their interview. Independent researchers who have studied the Restart Interview programme have all concluded that this indirect effect is extremely significant.

I hope this is helpful.

1988–89	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
Total Restart Interviews	157,562	211,306	176,822	445,594	101,764	118,408	210,344	349,122	282,658	2,053,580
Job Placings	408	938	1,183	3,476	480	962	1,198	1,977	1,745	12,367
Other Benefit Starts	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]
Programmes Starts[1]	23,756	27,887	22,093	50,813	11,201	19,877	27,074	42,570	45,110	270,381
Other Sign Offs	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]

[1] Jobclub, Enterprise Allowance Scheme (EAS), Restart Course, Employment Training (ET), Job Training Scheme, Community Programme, Voluntary Projects Programme.
[2] Statistics not collected.

1989–90	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
Total Restart Interviews	150,571	170,328	180,598	459,332	98,485	132,341	230,541	330,892	279,545	2,032,633
Job Placings	436	839	1,926	6,475	754	1,688	2,441	1,909	1,971	18,439
Other Benefit Starts	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]
Programmes Starts[1]	22,496	24,206	19,801	53,414	12,063	19,060	30,644	36,195	43,468	261,347
Other Sign Offs	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]	[2]

[1] Jobclub, EAS, Restart Course, ET.
[2] Statistics not collected.

1990–91	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
Total Restart Interviews	142,603	184,999	144,714	448,869	93,505	114,717	167,843	313,342	277,786	1,888,378
Job Placings	639	1,090	1,151	9,059	619	1,452	1,285	1,799	1,972	19,066
Other Benefit Starts	3,772	3,288	3,209	8,918	1,722	2,485	3,534	5,505	5,006	37,439
Programmes Starts[1]	17,266	18,185	14,369	37,989	10,519	12,705	21,803	28,145	31,782	192,763
Other Sign Offs (Fraud/Found Work)	3,258	4,647	8,084	12,373	5,997	5,748	6,258	10,618	7,586	64,569

[1] Jobclub, EAS, Restart Course, ET

1991–92	Northern	Yorks and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
Total Restart Interviews	173,776	226,727	211,000	646,400	147,202	151,821	237,165	404,875	296,974	2,495,940
Job Placings	794	1,052	2,456	7,720	1,094	1,466	1,599	2,413	2,591	21,185
Other Benefit Starts	5,054	6,483	6,476	14,959	3,690	5,111	5,958	11,400	10,147	69,278
Programmes Starts[1]	27,745	30,714	26,554	80,583	20,297	20,500	36,948	54,571	45,092	343,004
Other Sign Offs (Fraud-Found Work)	6,651	5,192	9,881	22,110	11,987	8,248	7,845	10,540	13,807	96,261

[1] Jobclub, EAS, Restart Course, ET, Job Review Workshop (JRW), Employment Action (EA), Job Interview Guarantee (JIG).

1992–93	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
Total Restart Interviews	172,212	209,592	252,469	854,311	200,833	148,542	258,437	441,163	280,722	2,818,281
Job Placings	2,730	12,241	10,005	37,193	6,325	6,646	11,297	12,723	12,583	111,743
Other Benefit Starts	3,402	5,437	6,271	15,338	4,061	4,482	5,476	10,970	8,076	63,513

1992–93	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
Programmes Starts[1]	23,913	31,980	33,208	120,924	31,349	21,783	38,529	56,170	39,179	397,035
Sign Offs as a Direct Result of CA Action	2,763	4,457	4,513	18,024	5,824	2,942	6,748	7,006	4,986	57,263

[1] Jobclub, EAS, Restart Course, ET, JRW, EA, JIG, Job Search Seminar (JSS)

1993–94	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
Total Restart Interviews	187,640	269,231	284,901	1,090,855	250,163	166,216	332,763	456,682	285,690	3,324,141
Job Placings	717	3,305	2,640	9,652	1,967	1,620	5,021	3,405	7,557	35,884
Other Benefit Starts	2,502	6,728	5,607	14,923	4,557	4,003	6,282	9,395	7,193	61,190
Programmes Starts[1]	37,339	60,523	54,999	267,664	63,400	32,829	71,488	83,207	60,391	731,840
Sign Offs as a Direct Result of CA Action	1,769	4,650	5,163	29,954	8,159	2,479	8,409	6,473	4,620	71,676

[1] All Employment Group Programme starts

1994–95	Northern	Yorkshire and Humberside	East Midlands	London and South East	South West	Wales	West Midlands	North West	Scotland	Total
Total Restart Interviews	215,683	340,134	343,155	1,198,258	271,335	187,989	364,259	504,059	333,721	3,758,593
Job placings	1,583	4,976	6,080	11,135	3,121	2,202	5,946	5,201	9,249	49,493
Other Benefit Starts	3,980	11,218	10,210	22,408	7,855	6,172	10,664	15,236	10,174	97,917
Programmes Starts[1]	49,551	73,054	78,590	310,001	70,317	40,284	85,935	103,620	78,480	901,832
Sign Offs as a Direct Result of CA Action	3,631	7,034	7,715	52,271	8,746	5,309	15,793	12,098	7,253	119,850

[1] Jobclub, business start-up, Restart course, training for work, community action, learning for work, JIG, work trials, JSS, jobplan, job review workshop, workwise.

Investors in People

Mr. Barron: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many employers currently holding investor in people status employ *(a)* 0 to 25 per cent., *(b)* 25 to 50 per cent., *(c)* 51 to 75 per cent. and *(d)* 76 to 100 per cent. of their staff on a part-time basis (i) for each of his Department's regions and (ii) nationally. [26504]

Mr. Paice: The information is not available in the form requested.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27290]

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Department, the Health and Safety Executive and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service follow the maternity and paternity arrangements and entitlements set out in the civil service management code, a copy of which is available in the Library. Women in those organisations are entitled to three months and one week's paid maternity leave. A woman who qualifies for paid maternity leave is also entitled to unpaid maternity leave, but the total period of paid and unpaid maternity leave must not exceed 52 weeks. These arrangements are provided in conjunction with the statutory entitlements available. There is also a two-day entitlement to paid paternity leave for permanent male staff. The Employment Service also follows the arrangements in the code with the exception that permanent male staff in that organisation are entitled to five days' paid paternity leave.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Colonel Armando Avolio Filho

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what information he has about Colonel Armando Avolio Filho, military attaché at the Brazilian embassy, and his role with respect to human rights violations; and when he became aware of this information. [27086]

Mr. David Davis: We first learned of the allegations against Colonel Avolio Filho from press reports on 24 May. Our ambassador in Brasilia was immediately instructed to seek the comments of the Brazilian Government. They have told us that President Cardoso signed on 1 June an order recalling Colonel Avolio Filho from his post as army attaché at the Brazilian embassy.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts he has had with the Brazilian embassy concerning Colonel Armando Avolio Filho, military attaché. [27087]

Mr. David Davis: Following the allegations against Colonel Avolio Filho reported in the press on 24 May, our ambassador in Brasilia was instructed to seek the comments of the Brazilian Government. I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave to his previous question.

Cyprus

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting that took place in London during the week of 22 May between Greek and Turkish Cypriots on the issue of Cyprus; and what role the British Government played in these discussions. [27075]

Mr. David Davis: Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot representatives met in London from 21 to 23 May for exploratory discussions within the framework of the UN Secretary-General's efforts to achieve a settlement in Cyprus. These discussions were a helpful exchange of views, although they did not yield as much progress as we would have wished. American and British representatives were involved as facilitators.

Rwanda

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action is being taken by the international community in respect of the termination of arrests for genocide in Rwanda as a result of prison overcrowding. [27329]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Britain, together with the international community, strongly supports action against those responsible for genocide in Rwanda. At the same time, there is concern about overcrowded prison conditions resulting from delays in bringing cases to trial. Britain, and other donors, have responded with assistance to reconstruct the judicial system in Rwanda and to improve prison conditions.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries are financing the international genocide tribunal for Rwanda; what financial contribution each has made; and what steps are being taken to increase the number of contributors. [27328]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda will be financed from member states' assessed contributions to the United Nations. In addition, a trust fund has been established for voluntary contributions. We have seconded three police officers to work for the prosecutor's office and have pledged £200,000 toward these and other costs. Official contributions to the trust fund have also been pledged by the following states:

New Zealand: $31,860
Switzerland: $75,757
Chile: $1,000
Norway: $50,000
Ireland: $79,225
USA: $500,000
Israel: $7,500
Egypt: $1,000
Lebanon: $3,000
Greece: $20,000
The Holy See: $3,000
Sweden: $65,000

A meeting of the Rwanda operational support group was held in Kigali on 19 May to discuss financing of the tribunal. We understand that the following contributions were pledged at this meeting:

Belgium: $1,000,000
USA: $4,600,000 + 10 investigators
Netherlands: $3,000,000 + 21 investigators
Germany: 1 investigator
Norway: $100,000
Spain: $150,000
Sweden: $70,000
Switzerland: $90,000 + 3 personnel

The UK continues to encourage other member states to contribute.

Bosnia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the occasions in the past 18 months in which each United Nations safe area in Bosnia has been used by *(a)* Bosnian Government Muslims and *(b)* Croatian forces for training troops and mounting attacks on Bosnian Serbian, Bosnian non-Government Muslim and Croatian Serbian positions. [272216]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In accordance with UN Security Council resolutions Nos. 819, 824 and 836, Bosnian Government forces are permitted to remain in all the safe areas in Bosnia; there are no safe areas in which Croatian forces are present. We support the efforts of the UN to secure the demilitarisation of the safe areas and call on both sides to co-operate with the UN commanders on the ground in their efforts to achieve this.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what occasions since 1 May an ultimatum was given to *(a)* the Bosnian Government Muslims and *(b)* the Bosnian Serbs to return heavy weapons taken from United Nations control; how many weapons were taken by each of the two sides; and if all the weapons taken by the Bosnian Muslims were returned to United Nations control before the deadlines expired. [27339]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On 24 May General Smith issued an ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs to return four weapons they had removed from Osijek and Poljine weapons collections points. This did not apply to the Bosnian Government, who had not taken weapons from UN control. At the same time General Smith demanded that both sides remove their heavy weapons from the 20 km exclusion zone around Sarajevo. Neither side has complied with either ultimatum.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many ground attacks have been launched by the Bosnian Government Muslims against the Bosnian Serbs since Sarajevo was declared a United Nations safe area. [272209]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no reliable statistics available regarding such attacks. We urge both sides to refrain from fighting and to co-operate with the UN in its efforts to renew the cessation of hostilities agreement which expired on 30 April.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on which side instigated the recent outbreak of hostilities in Sarajevo which led to United Nations military intervention. [27207]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The failure of both parties to renew the cessation of hostilities agreement on 30 April led to increased tension in Bosnia and an upsurge in fighting. Both sides used heavy weapons in and around Sarajevo. Following General Smith's ultimatum of 24 May, the Serbs continued shelling safe areas and refused to return the heavy weapons they had removed from UN collection points.

Slovenia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the numbers of Russian Orthodox Croatian Serbs killed by Catholic Croatian troops in western Slovenia. [27208]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no reliable independent figures available on the numbers of Croatian Serbs killed in this Croatian army action which is still under investigation by the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Croatian Government have stated that around 188 people died during the military operation.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27288]

Mr. Goodlad: The maternity and paternity entitlements available to FCO staff, as laid down in the FCO code of management, mirror those set out in leave chapters 3.1 and 5 of the civil service management code.

Female officers are provided with three months and one week's paid maternity leave for the period of continuous absence before and after confinement. They are also entitled to unpaid maternity leave, the amount of which is subject to the following restrictions:

a) the total of paid and unpaid maternity leave must not exceed 52 weeks;

b) unpaid maternity leave cannot be terminated earlier than 41 weeks from the actual date of confinement, except:

(i) where rule a) prevents this;

(ii) with the officer's consent.

Male officers, other than those on a temporary appointment of less than two years, are entitled to two days' paid paternity leave.

World Conference on Women

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what briefing notes his Department has produced or intends to produce for those attending the United Nations world conference on women in Beijing; and if he will place copies in the Library. [27236]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: A background brief is being prepared and will be deposited in the Library.

Father Joseph Jin Dechen

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has on the case of Father Joseph Jin Dechen, vicar-general of the Nanyang diocese and the reasons for his arrest, imprisonment and current confinement; and what representations have been made by his Department on Father Dechen's behalf. [27235]

Mr. Goodlad: Father Joseph Jin Dechen was arrested in 1981 after protesting about forced abortions, and was jailed in 1982. Father Dechen's case was raised by the Prime Minister with the Chinese authorities in 1991, and Father Dechen was released in 1992. We understand that Father Dechen is at present confined to his home village.

Messina Conference

Mr. Alan Howarth: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the meeting held in Messina, Sicily on 2 and 3 June.

Mr. David Davis: The meeting was held to mark the 40th anniversary of the Messina conference which paved the way for the foundation of the EEC. The Italian Foreign Minster hosted a working lunch which was attended by Foreign Ministers of all 15 member states, the President of the European Commission and the president of the European Parliament.

The first meeting of the study group, which will prepare for the 1996 inter-governmental conference, took place on 3 June in Taormina, near Messina. The group consists of the personal representatives of the Foreign Ministers of the EU. I am the representative. During this short initial meeting the group considered its timetable and agreed the following schedule of meetings:

13–14 June (venue: Luxembourg)
30 June and 1 July (Spain)
10–11 July (Strasbourg)
24–25 July (Brussels)
4–5 September (Brussels)
11–12 September (Brussels)
25–26 September (Brussels)
3–4 October (Luxembourg)
16–17 October (Brussels)
23–24 October (Brussels)
6–7 November (Brussels)
13–14 November (Brussels)
21–22 November (Brussels)
5–6 December (Brussels)

The group also considered the scope of its work on the basis of a paper circulated by its chairman, Carlos Westendorp, Spanish Minister for Europe. It was agreed that until the end of July the group should take a first look at the EU's institutions; citizenship; justice and home affairs issues; the common foreign and security policy and defence; and the procedural issues such as legislative instruments and budgetary procedures.

The chairman stressed that the study group's task was not to negotiate. Its purpose was to present a range of options to Heads of Government to assist them in determining the scope of the inter-governmental conference.

Members of the group agreed that the IGC next year would be designed to develop the EU, especially to prepare the way for further enlargement. The study group would consider the challenges facing the EU, which included the need to make it more relevant and comprehensible.

In making my initial address to the study group, I stressed that the Union faced major challenges in the coming years. The challenges included enlargement to the countries of central and eastern Europe, improving European competitiveness, making Europe relevant and acceptable to its people and developing a more effective common foreign and security policy.

I emphasised that none of these goals required greater centralisation. On the contrary, there should be a greater role for national parliaments and a reinforcement of subsidiarity and deregulation. I said that the UK would oppose extension of qualified majority voting. Seeking to out-vote states when their vital national interests were at stake would be likely to create more problems that it solved and could build up resentment.

I pointed out that there was no need for a massive overhaul of the basic Maastricht structure, which provided the necessary framework for further enlargement. A major overhaul would bewilder and alienate the European public.

Finally, I emphasised the importance of carrying the people of Europe along in any decisions reached later in the inter-governmental conference. The European Union

should be built for the benefit of Europe's citizens, not its politicians.

WALES

Abattoirs

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for *(a)* 1970, *(b)* 1975, *(c)* 1980, *(d)* 1985 and *(e)* for each available year after 1990 the number of abattoirs operating in each county and in Wales as a whole; and if he will make a statement. [26554]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Figures for the numbers of abattoirs before 1993 are derived from records of state veterinary service visits made at the end of each year as set out in the chief veterinary officer's reports for those years. The information for 1970 and 1975 is not available in the form requested and information for individual counties up to 1993 can be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The number of abattoirs operating in Wales was 62 in 1980, 72 in 1985, 60 in 1990, 55 in 1991 and 54 in 1992. From 1993, information on slaughterhouses relates to numbers licensed, and at the end of 1993 and 1994, the number of licensed abattoirs in Wales by county was as follows:

County	*1993*	*1994*
Clwyd	10	11
Dyfed	7	7
Gwent	3	3
Gwynedd	7	7
Mid Glamorgan	2	2
Powys	6	6
South Glamorgan	—	—
West Glamorgan	4	4
Total	39	40

NHS Consultants (Leave)

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the guidelines establishing the maximum blocks of time that can be accumulated as leave by NHS consultants; and what are the maximum number of years during which accumulated leave entitlement can be carried over from the actual leave year into subsequent years. [27365]

Mr. Redwood: Under the terms and conditions of service for hospital medical and dental staff, NHS consultants are entitled to leave at the rate of six weeks a year; there are no specific guidelines in respect of accumulated leave.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what consultations he has had with the member of the European Commission responsible for regional policy concerning the funding of the Welsh Development Agency via *(a)* grant in aid and *(b)* the European regional development fund. [27366]

Mr. Redwood: None.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place in the Library a copy of correspondence between himself and the European Commission member responsible for the European regional development fund concerning additionality and the levels of grant in aid to the Welsh Development Agency and European regional development fund assistance to the agency; and if he will make a statement. [27367]

Mr. Redwood: There has been no such correspondence.

EDUCATION

Peripatetic Music Teachers

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will supply for each local education authority area the number of peripatetic music teachers employed for each of the last five years. [26432]

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally by the Department.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within her Department. [27291]

Mr. Boswell: The Department's established employees qualify for maternity and paternity benefits in accordance with the civil service management code chapters 3.1 and 5, which are set out in the Department's staff terms and conditions handbook. For mothers the main entitlements are: three months and one week'—14 weeks—of paid maternity leave, followed by four weeks of lower rate SMP; the right to resume work after 14 weeks' paid leave returning to the same job and the same terms and conditions as if she had not been absent. Staff also have the option to extend their unpaid maternity leave provided that the total amount of paid and unpaid leave does not exceed the maximum amount of 52 weeks. Officers who become fathers are entitled to two days' paternity leave at the time of the birth or afterwards.

Casual staff and those on fixed—term appointments are also entitled to 14 weeks' maternity leave irrespective of the hours worked or length of service, in accordance with the EC pregnant workers directive.

Parental Choice

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many parents secured the primary or secondary school of their first choice for their child in each of the last three years *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each local education authority. [27183]

Mr. Robin Squire: This information is not collected centrally.' The most recent evidence—from surveys commissioned by the Association of Metropolitan Authorities in 1992 and *The Times* in 1993—suggests that some 90 per cent. of parents gain a place at their first choice school.

Regulations

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the circulars, orders or regulations which have not been published or made by the due date; what was the due date in each case; and when was the date of publication or making of the order or regulation. [27184]

Mr. Boswell: It is not the general practice of the Department to indicate in advance a due date for the making of an order or regulation or the publication of a circular although, in some cases, a broad indication may be given as to when a the order or regulation might be expected to be made or when a circular might be expected to be published. A consultation draft of an order or regulation may contain a commencement date but this, like other parts of the draft, is subject to change.

Exceptionally, in the context of the Education Act 1993, the Department for education published a "timetable of DFE publications" which included dates for the coming into effect of the legislation and publication dates for relevant circulars. In relation to published circulars the cases where the timetabled date differed from the publication date are as follows:

Subject	*Timetabled date*	*Publication*
GM Schools Acquisition, Transfer and Governance	November 1993	December 1993
Incorporation of governing bodies and dual use	November 1993	December 1993
Local Management of Schools	November 1993	December 1993
GM School: supply of school places etc.	March 1994	November 1994
Behaviour and discipline	April 1994	May 1994
Sex education	April 1994	May 1994
Emotional and behavioural difficulties	April 1994	May 1994
Time limiting on exclusions procedures	April 1994	May 1994
Exclusions	April 1994	May 1994
Exclusions: money following the child	April 1994	July 1994
Pupil Referral Units	April 1994	May 1994
Sick children	April 1994	May 1994
Children looked after by LEAs	April 1994	May 1994

School Closures

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many proposals from local authorities to close or re-organise schools have been awaiting a decision from her for *(a)* up to three months, *(b)* three to six months, *(c)* six to nine months, *(d)* nine to 12 months and *(e)* more than 12 months. [27185]

Mr. Robin Squire: The number of proposals published under either section 12 or 13 of the Education Act 1980 which have been under consideration in the Department for the periods indicated is as follows:

less than three months: 65
three to six months: 58
six to nine months: 65
nine to 12 months: 11
more than 12 months: 12

Proposals received by the Department within the last four months may in certain cases fall to the local authority to determine.

School Meals

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the percentage of school pupils entitled to free school meals for each year since 1979. [27186]

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was collected from maintained schools in England for the first time in January 1993. At this time, 20 per cent. of pupils were reported as known to be eligible for free school meals. In January 1994, the figure was 21 per cent.

National Youth Agency

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she plans to announce her decision on the future of the National Youth Agency. [27187]

Mr. Boswell: We expect to announce our decisions on the future of the National Youth Agency before long.

Grants for Education Support and Training

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what are the national totals under each heading of the GEST programme in 1995–96. [27188]

Mr. Robin Squire: The national allocations under the grants for education support and training programme for 1995–96 are shown in the table.

Grants for education support and training programme, 1995–96 allocations

Grant number	*Grant title*	*£ million*
1	School Effectiveness	121.5
2(a)	NC Assessment—Verification	8.0
2(b)	NC Assessment—Supply Cover	15.3
3	Primary Teachers' Subject Knowledge	16.6
4	Training for SEN Specialisms	10.4
5	Educational Psychologists	2.8
6	School SEN Policies	10.2
7	SEN Parent Partnership Scheme	4.0
8	Articled Teachers' Bursaries	0.7
9	Articled Teachers' Other Costs	0.3
10	Induction of Newly Qualified Teachers	6.0
11	Licensed and Overseas Teachers	1.9
12(a)	Vocational Qualifications—Introduction	11.6
12(b)	Vocational Qualifications—Piloting	1.3
13	Truancy and Disaffected Pupils	15.4
14	Youth Action Scheme	2.9
15	Youth and Community Workers	1.2
16	Bilingual Pupils	5.9
17	Child Protection	3.0
18	Training for Careers Teachers	4.1
19(a)	Drug Prevention in Schools—Formula Allocations	4.3
19(b)	Drug Prevention in Schools—Bids	1.6
20	Specialists Schools (Voluntary Aided Technology Colleges)	2.0
	Total	251.0

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how grant-maintained schools will benefit from the school improvement programme announced by her on 25 May. [28111]

Mr. Forth: As my right hon. Friend made clear in her announcement, this programme of measures is designed to promote improvement in all publicly funded schools. The aim is to secure maximum benefit from the new system of inspection and the action plans for improvement which follow. Grant-maintained schools receive special purpose grant (development) to assist in this process; this grant replicates, in the different circumstances of GM

schools, the grants for education support and training available to LEA schools. The Funding Agency for Schools will consult GM schools on additional flexibility to enable them to focus some of their resources in the period immediately following an Ofsted inspection. GM schools will also be able to make use of the list of advisers and consultants produced by the Department to extend the range and choice of professional advice to support school improvement.

ENVIRONMENT

Westminster Redevelopment

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *534–5*, if he is now in a position to ensure that the block of Georgian buildings at 20A-32 Baker street can be saved from demolition; and if he will enforce the decision made by his predecessor in 1981 to preserve the buildings. [26736]

Sir Paul Beresford: In the event of a breach of planning or listed building control responsibility for day-to-day enforcement rests with the local planning authority.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer on 14 March, *Official Report*, column *534*, if he has now completed his consideration of the issues raised by the chief executive of Westminster city council regarding the development of properties in Westminster; and if he will make a statement on his conclusions. [27094]

Sir Paul Beresford: No.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to obtain a copy of the legal opinion of Michael Barnes QC, regarding the conduct of Councillor Andrew Greystoke and Councillor David Weeks of Westminster city council, in relation to planning applications for the buildings at 20A-32 Baker street, London; and what account he intends to take of the legal opinion in making a decision on whether he should call in the planning permission concerned. [27019]

Sir Paul Beresford: I am in receipt of a copy of the legal opinion of Michael Barnes QC. All relevant information will be taken into account in deciding whether the planning applications should be called in for the Secretary of State's determination.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 15 March, *Official Report*, column *595*, what assessment he has made of any material considerations which indicated that the planning permission sought for the block bounded by Baker street, Blandford street and Manchester street in Westminster should be granted contrary to the major policies contained in the local authorities' statutory plans. [27082]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Department was notified of the information on the outstanding applications and is currently considering all the relevant information.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what account he will take of *(a)* the views of Westminster council officers, *(b)* the advice of English Heritage and *(c)* the previous appeal decision by his predecessor in his decision on whether to call in the planning application at 20A-32 Baker street, Westminster. [27023]

Sir Paul Beresford: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my previous reply.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to investigate the conduct of Councillor Andrew Greystoke and Councillor David Weeks with regard to planning decisions made by Westminster city council in 1990; and if he will make a statement. [27020]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State has no such plans.

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his answer of 14 March, *Official Report*, column *534*, what plans he has to investigate the events surrounding the redevelopment of the block bounded by Baker street, Blandford street, George street and Manchester street in Westminster in the light of more recent information he may have received. [27093]

Sir Paul Beresford: None at present. I refer the hon. Gentleman to my earlier reply.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27289]

Sir Paul Beresford: The general provisions available to staff in DOE follow the provisions of the civil service management code, a copy of which is in the Library and are in line with current legislation. These include:

Paid time off for ante-natal care;

Up to 52 weeks maternity leave (including up to 18 weeks paid leave);

The right to return to work at the end of maternity leave;

2 days paternity leave for male staff.

Pollution

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the percentage changes in waterborne inputs of cadmium, mercury, copper, zinc and lead to the North sea and to all other coastal waters which have been achieved by the United Kingdom since 1985. [27362]

Mr. Atkins: Following are the figures set out in the progress report being considered by the North sea conference on 8 to 9 June.

Reduction in UK inputs 1985–1995

Substance	*North Sea: per cent. reduction*	*All other UK sea areas: per cent. reduction*
Cadmium	70	43
Mercury	73	80
Copper	47	56
Zinc	16	23
Lead	79	39

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the annexe 1A substances for which he expects the 50 per cent. reduction target for North sea waterborne inputs will be met by the United Kingdom. [27363]

Mr. Atkins: There are 36 substances listed in annexe 1A of the ministerial declaration of the third North sea conference in 1990. It is anticipated that the UK will meet the target of achieving a significant reduction of 50 per cent. or more of waterborne inputs of 24 of these substances to the North sea between 1985 and 1995. Reductions will exceed 45 per cent. for three others. The 27 substances are:

Mercury
Cadmium
Copper (47 per cent.)
Lead
Arsenic
Chromium
Nickel (46 per cent.)
Drins
Hexachlorohexane (HCH) (46 per cent.)
DDT
Pentachlorophenol
Hexachlorobenzene
Hexachlorobutadiene
Carbon tetrachloride
Tributyltin compounds
Tetrachloroethylene
Trichlorobenzene
Trichloroethane
Simazine
Atrazine
Azinophos–ethyl
Azinophos-methyl
Fenthion
Malathion
Parathion
Parathion-methyl
Dichlorvos

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage changes in atmospheric and waterborne inputs taken together of mercury and cadmium to the North sea that he expects will be achieved by the United Kingdom between 1985 and 1995. [27364]

Mr. Atkins: It is anticipated that the UK will achieve reductions between 1985 and 1995 in a range of 59 per cent. to 66 per cent. for mercury and 52 per cent. to 62 per cent. for cadmium.

Birds of Prey

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action is planned by Her Majesty's Government to examine the growth in populations of birds of prey and their impact on game bird management and racing pigeons. [28067]

Mr. Atkins: On 24 April, Environment Department officials met interested parties to discuss these issues. Following broad agreement reached at that meeting, the Government propose to establish a regular forum to consider the implications of the growth in the populations of birds of prey and to set up a working group to examine the facts and identify possible action.

The working group will:

consider population status of birds of prey;
identify species alleged to be causing problems;
identify, in particular, the impact of such species on game birds and moorland management and on racing pigeons;
identify gaps in research and future needs, and identify possible sources of funding;
consider statutory and other mechanisms for the resolution of problems; and
report back to the forum within one year.

The working group, which will be chaired jointly by officials from my Department and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, will reflect a wide range of interests. It will be set up as soon as possible.

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list those sales involving surplus land and property in which his Department has inserted a clause in the sale contract allowing his Department to obtain a share of any future development gain; and if he will make a statement. [26326]

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* My Department's policy on disposals is to obtain the best price possible. To achieve that our consultants are required to investigate all feasible uses and development potential and to obtain town planning consent where it is appropriate to do so. Clawback clauses are used only where, despite the best efforts of our consultants, it is not possible to establish a property's potential with any degree of certainty. Thus there are relatively few cases where clawback clauses have been imposed and these are as follows:

Mickle Trafford Buffer Depot, Lancashire;
Land Border Post, Rosslea, Northern Ireland;
Former Benefit Office, Drakewell, Cornwall;
Rhodes House, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich;
72 South Market Road, Great Yarmouth;
Land at Northwood Hills, Pinner;
56–60 Conduit Street, London, W1

DEFENCE

Area Flag Officers

Mr. Streeter: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of area flag officer posts. [27984]

Mr. Soames: A consultation document was issued on 2 March 1995 setting out the proposed reattribution of area flag officer tasks. Having given careful and sympathetic consideration to all the views expressed during the consultation period, I have decided to proceed to implementation of the proposals by 1 April 1996. This measure will save about £9,500,000 over the next 10 years. The posts of flag officer Plymouth and flag officer Portsmouth will be abolished and their tasks reattributed to other senior officers. Their representational tasks, which help maintain the Navy's strong links with these cities, will be undertaken by the remaining flag officers as appropriate, by the naval base commanders or by other senior officers if necessary. The post of flag officer Scotland, northern England and Northern Ireland will be merged with that of Commodore, Clyde at two-star level and also become the naval base commander, Clyde, and will have a one-star deputy. There will be a small overall net reduction in posts at Plymouth and Portsmouth of 20 service and 10 civilian posts. No reductions will be required in the FOSNNI/COMCLYDE areas beyond those which were announced by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for Defence Procurement on 16 February 1995 in his answer to the hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Robertson) at column *832*.

Royal Naval Supplies Depot, Endsleigh

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if a survey of G Block, Ministry of Defence Endsleigh was carried out prior to the decision to relocate the CRISP computer there from RNSD Eaglescliffe. [26655]

Mr. Soames: Yes. A survey of G Block, Endsleigh, was carried out in 1991 prior to the decision in 1994 to close the CRISP mainframe computer operation at RNSD Eaglescliffe.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what is the cost overrun of relocating the small parts stores from RNSD Eaglescliffe to Portsmouth. [26657]

Mr. Soames: No cost overrun is anticipated.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what surveys have been carried out of G and C blocks at Ministry of Defence Endsleigh. [26654]

Mr. Soames: A survey of G block was conducted in September 1991 after which re-cladding work was completed in early 1993. A further survey, carried out earlier this year, revealed faults in the structure of the annexe to G Block and this will shortly be vacated and demolished. Although no specific survey of C block has been conducted, in common with other upgrading on the site, windows are being replaced and the roof relayed; this work is due to be completed later this year.

Mr. Devlin: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the cost of demolishing, site clearance and construction of a replacement computer facility at Ministry of Defence Endsleigh. [26656]

Mr. Soames: No decisions have yet been taken on the location of the next generation of computer systems being developed for the Navy. It will not be possible to determine any costs, regardless of where they may be located, until the size and configuration of the type of hardware selected for this next generation of systems has been determined. A decision on this is expected later this year.

Mutual Defence Agreement

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all projects on which his Department is working jointly with Los Alomos National Laboratories. [26879]

Mr. Freeman: Under the 1958 UK-US mutual defence agreement, the Atomic Weapons Establishment works closely with Los Alamos National Laboratory on a number of areas of research. These include:

Neutron Sources
Irradiation Effects on Materials and Components
High Explosives for Nuclear Weapons
Chemistry and Compatibility of Materials
Metallurgy of Weapons Materials
Non-Nuclear Components
Non-Metallic Materials
Weapons Material Management
Nuclear Weapons Engineering
Physics Design
Weapons Hydrodynamics
Computational Technology
Nuclear Weapons Physics
Nuclear Forces and Counter-Proliferation Studies
Manufacturing Technology
Nuclear Warhead Accident Response Technology
Nuclear Weapon Computer Code Development
Nuclear Weapons Environment and Damage Effects

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all projects on which his Department is working jointly with Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories. [26880]

Mr. Freeman: Under the 1958 UK-US mutual defence agreement, the Atomic Weapons Establishment works closely with Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory on a number of areas of research. These include:

Irradiation Effects on Materials and Components
High Explosives for Nuclear Weapons
Chemistry and Compatibility of Materials
Test Monitoring
Metallurgy of Weapons Materials
Non-Metallic Materials
Weapons Material Management
Nuclear Weapons Engineering
Physics Design
Weapons Hydrodynamics
Computational Technology
Nuclear Weapons Physics
Nuclear Forces and Counter Proliferation Studies
Manufacturing Technology
Nuclear Warhead Accident Response Technology
Nuclear Weapon Computer Code Development
Nuclear Weapons Environment and Damage Effects

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much money is being paid annually to Sandia National Laboratory in return for them providing engineering services in support of the Trident systems re-entry body. [26881]

Mr. Freeman: The precise figure is commercially sensitive, but amounts to less than $1 million per year.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all projects on which Sandia National Laboratories is working on behalf of the United Kingdom Government, in addition to those listed on page 7.69 of Sandia National Laboratories institutional plan, FY 1995–2000. [26882]

Mr Freeman: Sandia National Laboratory provides certain services in support of the UK Trident programme. Sandia also provides goods and services to support the UK nuclear research programme under contracts placed on the laboratory by the US Department of Energy on behalf of the UK Ministry of Defence. These are described as "projects" in Sandia's institutional plan.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27292]

Mr. Freeman: Subject to certain qualifying conditions, most women who intend to return to work after their confinement are allowed three months and one week's maternity absence on full pay, and up to a further 38 weeks' unpaid absence. Service women are allowed 14 weeks on full pay and up to a further 34 weeks unpaid absence.

Most fathers, except for service men, are allowed two days leave with pay at or soon after the date on which their children are born.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what action he and the management executive have taken in Northern Ireland as a consequence of the findings of the EOC (Great Britain) report into the gender impact of CCT in local government. [26012]

Mr. Moss: The health and personal social service management executive has examined the EOC (Great Britain) report and noted that the EOC policy recommendations arising from it are directed to local authorities in Great Britain, employers, trade unions and Government. With regard to the issues for Government, these mainly relate to proposed legislative changes for which the HPSS management executive has no responsibility.

Health Boards (Staff)

Mr. Soley: to ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* women and *(b)* men employed in support services in each health board fell below the national insurance lower earnings limit for each year since 1990. [26003]

Mr. Moss: The information is as follows:

Number of men and women in each board trust employed in support services whose earnings are below the national insurance lower earnings limit

Board trust	1990–91		1991–92		1992–93		1993–94		1994–95	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Eastern HSSB	2	33	3	44	4	26	1	31	0	0
Northern HSSB	0	30	3	33	1	13	1	25	0	15
Southern HSSB	4	19	0	15	0	15	1	18	0	1
Western HSSB	0	5	0	2	0	4	1	1	0	2
Belfast City Hospital	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1	1	3
Royal Group of Hospitals	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	1	0	0
Greenpark	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
Eastern Ambulance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
Ulster, North Down and Ards Hospitals	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	5	0	7
Craigavon Area Hospital	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	0	0
South and East Belfast Community	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	4
North and West Belfast Community	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	2
North Down and Ards Community	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	7
Down and Lisburn	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	3
Mater Infirmorum Hospital	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
Newry and Mourne	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	6
Craigavon and Banbridge Community	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0
Central Services Agency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	6	87	6	94	5	58	4	82	5	51

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the change in the number of full-time and part-time jobs by gender immediately prior to and immediately after tendering of each support service contract tendered by the four health boards since 1990. [26000]

Mr. Moss: The detailed information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, it is known that there was not necessarily a loss of jobs within the health and personal social service as a result of tendering. A number of contracts were awarded in-house and other staff moved to different posts within their organisation.

NHS Support Services

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total annual expenditure on NHS support services, including catering, domestic, portering, grounds maintenance, estate services and telephones, by each of the health boards in each year since 1990. [26011]

Mr. Moss: The information is not available in the exact form requested. In 1992–93, the format of the boards' accounts were changed to allow for the appointment of overheads and capital charges to services. Comparison of expenditure figures from that date with those before it is apt to mislead. Consequently, the information provided in the tables below commences with 1992–93.

Health and Social Services Board/HSS Trust	1992–93 £	1993–94 £
Catering		
Northern Board	5,319,679	5,230,055
Southern Board	4,403,175	3,549,475
Eastern Board	15,132,404	8,118,187
Western Board	5,512,582	5,787,112
Royal Group Hospitals HSS Trust	n/a	2,492,283
Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	2,197,239
Craigavon Area Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	1,463,317
Greenpark Healthcare HSS Trust	n/a	924,436
Ulster North Down and Ards Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	1,672,137
Eastern Ambulance Service HSS Trust	n/a	n/a
Total	30,367,840	31,434,241
Domestic		
Northern Board	4,250,292	4,392,266
Southern Board	3,311,888	2,620,158
Eastern Board	13,966,737	6,192,290
Western Board	2,824,806	2,818,703

Health and Social Services Board/HSS Trust	1992–93 £	1993–94 £
Royal Group Hospitals HSS Trust	n/a	4,094,951
Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	1,656,460
Craigavon Area Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	736,213
Greenpark Healthcare HSS Trust	n/a	1,170,682
Ulster North Down and Ards Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	1,179,362
Eastern Ambulance Service HSS Trust	n/a	n/a
Total	24,353,723	24,861,085
Portering and Transport		
Northern Board	2,694,339	3,569,974
Southern Board	1,391,971	1,085,317
Eastern Board	9,071,087	4,607,199
Western Board	2,120,395	2,274,714
Royal Group Hospitals HSS Trust	n/a	1,755,282
Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	1,543,001
Craigavon Area Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	685,160
Greenpark Healthcare HSS Trust	n/a	880,492
Ulster North Down and Ards Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	804,653
Eastern Ambulance Service HSS Trust	n/a	n/a
Total	15,277,792	17,205,792
Building and Engineering		
Northern Board	6,721,512	8,173,374
Southern Board	8,324,237	5,790,577
Eastern Board	16,609,338	9,342,908
Western Board	4,969,474	4,589,090
Royal Group Hospitals HSS Trust	n/a	4,747,962
Belfast City Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	2,350,164
Craigavon Area Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	1,436,264
Greenpark Healthcare HSS Trust	n/a	1,795,674
Ulster North Down and Ards Hospital HSS Trust	n/a	1,720,362
Eastern Ambulance Service HSS Trust	n/a	n/a
Total	36,624,561	39,946,375

Market Testing Guidelines

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what were the findings when the management executive of the NHS in Northern Ireland applied the policy appraisal and fair treatment guidelines to its revised market testing guidelines in 1994. [26006]

Mr. Moss: The "Market Testing in the HPSS: Revised Guidance" was issued as a consequence of the specific commitment given in the White Paper "Competing for Quality", on page 21, that health departments would consolidate and improve existing best practice guidance, inter alia, to provide model contract terms and specifications; set out examples of good practice; provide procedure check lists; summarise financial arrangements; cover publicity for contracts; and describe reporting and monitoring procedures. The policy appraisal and fair treatment guidelines were not therefore applicable to this particular document.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27282]

Sir John Wheeler: In conjunction with the statutory entitlements available, and subject to certain conditions, a female employee is entitled to maternity leave of three months and one week on full pay. Unpaid maternity leave is also allowed, provided that taken together with paid leave, the total period does not exceed 52 weeks.

Male employees are entitled to two days paternity leave on full pay.

Departmental Budget

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the 1995–96 running cost limits for the Northern Ireland Office and Norther Ireland Departments. [27981]

Sir John Wheeler: The gross running cost limit for 1995–96 for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments is £789,017,000. There is also a net running cost limit of zero for the Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency. Details of the provision for individual Northern Ireland Departments are set out in the Northern Ireland estimates, which were laid before the House today.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Bangladesh

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the aid projects and their funding in which the United Kingdom is currently involved with Bangladesh. [26920]

Mr. Baldry: The information is given in the list of current British aid projects in Bangladesh, a copy of which has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

Family Planning

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information is provided to his Department by the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations population fund prior to the approval of his Department's grants to their core budgets. [26935]

Mr. Baldry: Decisions concerning the United Kingdom's contributions to the core activities of the United Nations population fund—UNFPA—and the International Planned Parenthood Federation are based on our assessment of the value of both organisations in contributing to better reproductive health. This assessment is based on reports of their programmes, our own monitoring of their work, and participation in UNFPA's governing body and IPPF's annual donors' meetings.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the transfer of buildings controlled by the Galton Institute to the International Planned Parenthood Federation. [26895]

Mr. Baldry: We understand from the International Planned Parenthood Federation that there has been no transfer of buildings, controlled by the Galton Institute, to it.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs what information he has on the practice of some donor nations of tying aid to the implementation of family planning programmes; and in which countries where such conditions have been applied his Department is working. [26933]

Mr. Baldry: We are not aware of any donor countries that currently tie aid to the implementation of family planning programmes.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what documentation he has other than annual reports of the use to which the core funds of the IPPF and UNFPA are put. [26934]

Mr. Baldry: We have access to a variety of documents, including evaluation and review reports, which describe the activities and programmes supported by the core funds of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the United Nations population fund.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will place in the Library copies of the estimates of unmet family planning demand prepared by the United Nations population fund and similar organisations together with copies of studies undertaken by his own Department. [27297]

Mr. Baldry: A large number of country studies examining the unmet demand for family planning have been undertaken over the years. We will arrange for a sample of such studies to be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what amount was donated by the Overseas Development Administration in 1993–94 for primary health care projects excluding family planning provision in *(a)* India, *(b)* Pakistan, *(c)* Malaysia, *(d)* Sri Lanka, *(e)* Cambodia, *(f)* El Salvador, *(g)* Nicaragua, *(h)* Mexico, *(i)* Peru, *(j)* Oceania regional, *(k)* Russian Federation, *(l)* Africa regional, *(m)* Burkina Faso, *(n)* Ethiopia, *(o)* Ghana, *(p)* Kenya, *(q)* Nigeria, *(r)* Tanzania, *(s)* Togo, *(t)* Uganda, *(u)* Malawi, *(v)* Sierra Leone, *(w)* South Africa, *(x)* Zaire, *(y)* Zambia and *(z)* Zimbabwe. [27226]

Mr. Baldry: In most developing countries, primary health care incorporates reproductive health care, including the provision of means by which people can, if they wish, have children by choice. It is impractical to try and distinguish the proportion of our aid to countries which is given for primary health care "excluding family planning provision".

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what considerations underlie his Department's decision on the relative amounts to be spent on primary health care projects in Bangladesh and on reproductive health projects and family planning. [27298]

Mr. Baldry: The British aid programme helps promote strategic development objectives agreed with the Government of Bangladesh. Primary health care is a priority, within which reproductive health care, including the provision of means by which women and men can, if they wish, have children by choice, forms an essential part. Our emphasis within our primary health care programmes in Bangladesh is on preventive care and local capacity to use British aid effectively.

China

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what liaison exists between officials of his Department and the China Family Planning Association and the representatives of the United Nations Population Fund in China. [26932]

Mr. Baldry: Officials from the British embassy in Peking do meet occasionally with representatives of the United Nations population fund based in China, but have not met with representatives of the China Family Planning Association.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *514*, (1) what information he has on the actions taken by the International Planned Parenthood Federation to fight against Chinese policies which discriminate on grounds of gender, race, creed and political beliefs in Tibet; [26894]

(2) what information he has on the actions taken by the China Family Planning Association to fight against Chinese policies which discriminate on grounds of gender, race, creed and political beliefs in Tibet. [26936]

Mr. Baldry: The International Planned Parenthood Federation is opposed to any form of discrimination in the implementation of policies relevant to reproductive health. IPPF encourages its member organisations to pursue this stance. The information we receive, through our discussions with IPPF, indicates that the China Family Planning Association is helping to alert the relevant authorities at township and provincial levels in China to instances of discrimination in the implementation of population policies.

Malaysia

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 18 May, *Official Report*, column *301*, if he will list the 11 power projects rejected by the Overseas Development Administration because they did not meet the developmental, commercial and industrial criteria for the aid and trade provision scheme, for budgetary reasons or because they were not accepted by recipient governments. [26911]

Mr. Baldry: The list of the 11 projects is as follows:

1. Sarawak Power Transmission
2. Ulu Jelai Hydro Electric
3. Accelerated Power Transmission
4. Connaught Bridge II Gas Turbine
5. Supply of Power Transmission Lines
6. Sabah Hydro Electric Power Stations
7. Paka and Pasir Gudang Power Station
8. Diesel Power Extension
9. Sabah Gas Turbine
10. Liwagu Hydro Electric
11. Transformers

EU Programmes

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the value in cash and constant prices of the United Kingdom contribution to the EU's programmes for central and eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and non-EU Mediterranean states in each year since 1990. [26975]

Mr. Baldry: United Kingdom contributions to EU programmes for central and eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and non-EU Mediterranean states since 1990 have been:

Figures in £ million

	1990	1991	1992	1993[1]
CEE countries (PHARE)				
Cash value	25.3	31.3	54.1	61.5
Value at constant 1993 prices	28.5	33.0	54.6	61.5
FSU countries (TACIS)				
Cash value	0	0.04	3.9	21.2
Value at constant 1993 prices	0	0.04	3.9	21.2
Non-EU Mediterranean countries				
Cash value	16.2	16.5	24.7	45.2
Value at constant 1993 prices	18.2	17.4	24.9	45.2

[1] Most recent year for which data are available.

Liberia

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how British contributions to the Liberia trust fund have been spent. [27326]

Mr. Baldry: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 21 February, *Official Report*, column *130*.

As the security situation in Liberia shows no sign of improvement, projects for which our funds are earmarked are not yet able to be implemented.

Illegal Abortion

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has on the numbers estimated to have died from illegal abortion, in the last year for which figures are available, by the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities; and on what basis their figures were calculated; [27240]

(2) what is his Department's estimate on the number of women who die worldwide annually from illegal abortion; and what is the basis for this figure. [27239]

Mr. Baldry: Estimates of deaths resulting from the termination of pregnancy—whether legal or illegal—are based on information collated by the World Health Organisation. The quality of data is very uncertain as there is a reluctance to attribute death to abortion where it is illegal. Although earlier estimates suggested that up to 200,000 women may die, per year, from abortion, a study, undertaken by WHO last year—based on data sources such as hospital admission records and maternal mortality studies—estimated that 70,000 women die each year as a result of complications following unsafe abortions.

HEALTH

Mercury

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what evidence she has evaluated on the migration of mercury from amalgam fillings to human organs; and if she will make a statement on the impact of increased levels of mercury fillings on recorded levels of mercury in human tissue. [26675]

Mr. Malone: The Committee on Toxicity advised in 1986 that the use of dental amalgam is free from the risk of systemic toxicity and that only a few cases of hypersensitivity occur. The subsequent research findings, and recent evaluations by several authoritative national and international expert committees are consistent with that advice. The Department of Health will continue to assess and evaluate all research in this area.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what level of specific funding is available for research into toxicity levels of mercury in humans from potential sources with particular reference to *(a)* mercury in the food chain, *(b)* mercury in dental amalgam and *(c)* environmental mercury. [26676]

Mr. Malone: Research has been carried out in a number of countries, including the United Kingdom, about the health effects of mercury. Research to determine the long term biological safety of all types of materials used in primary dental care has been identified as a priority for the national health service primary dental care research and development programme; £175,000 has been allocated to the programme for the 1995–96 financial year and the first call for proposals will be made shortly. The NHS regions also fund research and development, including a project into the safety aspects of dental amalgam during pregnancy which is funded by South and West regional health authority at a cost of £45,000.

The main agency through which the Government support biomedical and clinical research is the Medical Research Council which receives its grant in aid from the office of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. The Department of Health's policy research programme also commissions research to meet identified policy needs. There is no specific budget for research into toxicity from mercury. Decisions on whether to support research proposals are made on the basis of competing priorities and the scientific merit of the proposal.

Suicide

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what progress is being made towards achieving the "Health of the Nation" target relating to suicides among severely mentally ill people; [26649]

(2) how her Department *(a)* currently monitors and *(b)* proposes to monitor progress towards the "Health of the Nation" target relating to suicides among severely mentally ill people. [26648]

Mr. Bowis: Following the references to the limitations in available data in the "Health of the Nation" White Paper, we have carried out some detailed technical work to identify a viable measure. We have decided to introduce from next year district returns which show the incidence of suicide and unexplained death among severely mentally ill people, defined for the time being as people subject to a care programme. This will enable changes in the incidence to be tracked.

Prescriptions

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the top 100 prescribed items, giving their actual cost to the NHS. [26981]

Mr. Malone: A list of the top 100 items by prescription volume dispensed in 1994 has been placed in the Library. The total net ingredient cost of these items was £941 million.

Hepatitis C

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received about the problems of haemophiliacs infected with hepatitis C. [27191]

Mr. Sackville: Representations this year include seven parliamentary questions, a short debate in the House of Lords and five early-day motions. In addition Ministers have received 214 letters.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her Department's most recent estimate of the number of people infected with hepatitis C from contaminated blood products; and how many of these are haemophiliacs. [27344]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Morning-after Pill

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to make post-coital oral contraceptives available in pharmacies without prescription. [27403]

Mr. Sackville: Any change to the legal classification of such medicines to allow them to be supplied by pharmacists without prescription would be subject to statutory consultation by the Medicines Control Agency with all interested organisations. No application has been received to reclassify any post-coital oral contraceptive from a prescription-only medicine to a pharmacy medicine.

Neurosurgical Units

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) if she will list all the neurosurgical units in Sussex and those in neighbouring counties with their distance in miles from the Sussex border; [27095]

(2) what guidelines she has issued about the maximum distance any patient should be from a neurosurgical unit; [27096]

(3) what is the total number of neurosurgical units in Sussex; what is the number of health authorities; and if she will list the health authorities that do not have a neurosurgical unit within their boundaries. [27097]

Mr. Sackville: The Department has not issued guidelines about the siting of neurosurgical units, but a recently published report from the neuroscience review group of South Thames Commissioners concluded that specialist neurosurgical services should be centralised in major units which can attract a minimum of 2,000 patients per year, to allow the development and maintenance of expertise in the management of these less common surgical problems. The review group identified St. George's hospital, Tooting, as meeting this standard. The recommendations are currently being considered by the South Thames health authorities responsible for purchasing these services.

The specific information requested is as follows:

Neurosurgical units in Sussex and neighbouring counties

County/London Borough	*Location of unit*	*Distance from Sussex county boundary[1] (miles)*
West Sussex	Hurstwood Park hospital	—
Wimbledon	Atkinson Morley's hospital	21
Camberwell	Kings College/Maudsley	25
Greenwich	The Brook hospital[2]	32
Hampshire	Southampton general hospital	26

[1] Estimated shortest distance by road to nearest town or village on or close to the border.
[2] Until transfer of services.

District Health Authorities in South Thames without neurosurgical units within their boundaries

East Sussex (The one unit currently in Sussex is located in West Sussex, the other Sussex DHA)
East Kent
West Kent
Eastern Surrey
Western Surrey
Bromley
Croydon
Bexley and Greenwich (On transfer of services from the Brook hospital)
Kingston and Richmond

Chemotherapy (Charges)

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on charging women for chemotherapy by Wigan and Leigh Health Service trust. [27098]

Mr. Sackville: Wigan and Leigh Health Service national health service trust issued a statement on Friday 26 May apologising unreservedly for having made charges and undertaking to reimburse those patients affected. The trust has changed its administrative procedures regarding prescription charges with immediate effect to ensure that these events are not repeated.

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what guidelines cover charging patients for chemotherapy treatment as *(a)* out-patients and *(b)* in-patients; and if she will ensure that there is a consistent approach to charging for chemotherapy treatment throughout the NHS; [27099]

(2) if she will make a statement on the definition of day care surgery and outpatient treatment; and whether prescription charges can be levied when clinicians administer drugs on hospital premises. [27100]

Mr. Sackville: Any medication administered in hospital, whether to in-patients or out-patients, does not attract prescription charges. This is the position under the National Health Service (Charges for Drugs and Appliances) Regulations 1989. Health authorities and trusts were reminded of this in guidelines issued in 1994, HSG(94)12, copies of which are available in the Library. A patient receiving treatment as a day case or as an out-patient—in other words who does not require the use of a hospital bed overnight—is liable for prescription charges for medication taken home.

HIV/AIDS

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much compensation has been paid to people who contracted HIV from contaminated blood products; how

many people have received compensation; and how many were haemophiliacs. [27345]

Mr. Sackville: Payments totalling £87 million have been made to those who contracted HIV from infected blood and blood products, and to their families. Of 1,511 people who received payments, 1,238 were haemophilia patients.

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within her Department. [27287]

Mr. Sackville: Female staff within the Department have the following maternity entitlements:

i. paid time off to attend ante-natal appointments;

ii. paid maternity leave of three months and one week;

iii. unpaid maternity leave up to a maximum of 52 weeks, inclusive of any period of paid maternity leave;

iv. an unpaid career break of up to five years.

Where a member of staff does not satisfy the conditions for paid leave, she may take a period of unpaid leave.

Male staff, except those on temporary appointments of less than two years, are entitled to two days' paid paternity leave; extra leave may be allowed where there are special difficulties.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Fisheries Regulations

14. **Mr. Butler:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to ensure that the proper enforcement of fisheries regulations is taking place. [25826]

Mr. Jack: Some £25 million is spent annually on inspection to enforce fisheries regulations both at sea and on land.

Lindane

15. **Mrs. Mahon:** To ask the Minster of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent studies he has commissioned into the use of lindane in pesticides. [25827]

Mrs. Browning: The non-agricultural uses of lindane were reviewed in 1995 by the independent advisory committee on pesticides, which advised that approvals for non-agricultural products containing lindane should continue. The agricultural uses of lindane are currently the subject of a review by the committee.

Veal Calves

16. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to support the development of the humane United Kingdom veal market. [25828]

Mrs. Browning: We are establishing a demonstration unit to show how veal calves can be raised using high welfare standards, at the ADAS research centre at Rosemaund, near Hereford.

Milk

17. **Mr. John Marshall:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received about the operations of Milk Marque. [25829]

Mr. Waldegrave: I have received several representations since vesting day about the operating practices of Milk Marque. Complaints about these practices are a matter for the competition authorities.

27. **Mr. Cash:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to seek changes in the European Community rules to permit trading in milk quota across member states' frontiers. [25839]

Mr. Waldegrave: We proposed the transferability of milk quotas between member states during the debate on CAP simplification, in last year's CAP price fixing negotiations and in Council earlier this year, when I advocated transnational quota leasing. The European Court of Auditors made a similar recommendation two years ago, but there is, as yet, no support for our ideas in the Council of Ministers.

Fish Stocks

18. **Mr. Cyril D. Townsend:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he is taking to ensure that stocks of fish are properly protected in the future. [25830]

Mr. Jack: Ensuring the sustainable exploitation of fish stocks in such a way that the livelihoods of this and future generations of fisheries are protected is one of my main priorities. A combination of R and D, currently running at £6.5 million a year, and strong enforcement of fishery rules will help to protect fish stocks for the future.

Office of Science and Technology Panel

19. **Sir Graham Bright:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he will take to respond to the recent report from the OST Technology Foresight Panel on Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment. [25831]

Mr. Waldegrave: We will respond by ensuring that these recommendations are taken fully into account in developing our research strategy. We will of course contribute to the overall Government response.

Set-aside Land

20. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what action he is taking to encourage public access to set-aside land. [25832]

Mr. Jack: Last September my right hon. Friend launched a new voluntary countryside access scheme which offers farmers annual payments in return for managing their set-aside land for public access under a five-year agreement.

28. **Mr. Flynn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what new proposals he has to improve the working of the set-aside land scheme. [25841]

Mr. Jack: In addition to the measures mentioned in my reply of 20 October 1994, *Official Report*, column *418*, my right hon. Friend has recently negotiated in Brussels agreement in principle that eligible land taken out of production under the forestry and agri-environment schemes may from next year count towards farmers' set-aside requirements under the arable area payments scheme.

Meat Hygiene Service

21. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has received from the abattoir industry to the proposed

level of charges to be levied by the Meat Hygiene Service. [25833]

Mrs. Browning: The Meat Hygiene Service has recently completed statutory consultation on its proposed charges. 91 responses were received in respect of the 1,866 premises consulted. These responses are currently being considered.

26. **Mr. O'Hara:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many members of the Federation of Fresh Meat Wholesalers have advised him of their opposition to the institution of the Meat Hygiene Service. [25838]

Mrs. Browning: Abattoir operators who write to us do not normally indicate whether they are members of a trade association.

Organic Farming

22. **Mr. Clappison:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what schemes are now in place to encourage organic farming methods. [25834]

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government are keen to assist the development of organic farming. The organic aid scheme for England was launched in August last year and provides financial assistance during conversion to organic production. Similar schemes are available in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In addition, the organic sector also benefits from a substantial programme of research and development and from our support for the work of the independent UK Register of Organic Food Standards. My Department currently spends around £1 million annually on R and D into economic and practical aspects of organic farming.

Meat Exports

23. **Mr. Mills:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he has taken to encourage on-the-hook meat exports. [25835]

Mrs. Browning: According to Meat and Livestock Commission estimates, our meat exports were worth nearly £1 billion in 1994. But it makes sense to increase these further. That is why in, for example, the beef sector we have in hand action to improve the quality of dairy beef, to open up new export markets; to develop the welfare friendly veal market; and to encourage the use of dairy breed beef in meat processing. We are also working with the industry on stepping up promotion of sheep carcass meat in our chief export markets.

Agrifood Business

24. **Dr. Twinn:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what contributions his Department is making to improving the prospects of sales from Britain's agrifood business on a world-wide basis. [25836]

Mr. Jack: MAFF has its own export promotion division, specifically designed to help UK agri-food exporters win business worldwide. My ministerial colleagues and I also take a personal interest in promoting UK capabilities abroad. This year we propose to take business teams to Mexico, Brazil, Indonesia, India where opportunities for UK exports exist. We are also representing UK interests at agri-food exhibitions in China, Poland, the Baltic States, the Netherlands, Germany, Russia, Brazil, Colombia, Thailand and Kazakhstan.

In addition, Food From Britain, which is partly funded by my Department, has offices in key European markets as well as North America and has a substantial programme of action in support of British food exporters. Ministers give support by attending and speaking at major food and drink exhibitions around the world.

Common Agricultural Policy

25. **Mr. Clapham:** To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the total cost of the common agriculture policy in 1996. [25837]

Mr. Waldegrave: The 1996 preliminary draft budget for common agricultural policy expenditure has been set at the level of the guideline of 40.8 billion ecu or £33.9 billion. If it proves necessary, the budgetary discipline decision provides for access to the monetary reserve of 500 mecu or £415 million for additional costs resulting from a weakening of the US dollar of from realignments of the exchange rate mechanism which took place in late 1992 and early 1993. In addition, the CAP also imposes a cost on consumers. A note on the impact on consumers and taxpayers is available in the Library.

Sheep

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the amount of subsidy provided per sheep by *(a)* the British Government and *(b)* the European Union. [26905]

Mr. Jack: Payments under the 1994 sheep annual premium scheme were fixed at £16.96 per eligible ewe, with an additional supplement of £5.24 per ewe payable to producers in the less-favoured areas. Rates have not yet been fixed for 1995. The scheme is fully funded by the European Union.

Hill livestock compensatory allowances are also payable on sheep in the LFAs. In severely disadvantaged areas, allowances under the 1995 scheme are paid at the rate of £5.75 per specially qualified ewe and £3.00 per qualified ewe. In disadvantaged areas, allowances are paid at the rate of £2.44 per qualified ewe. Up to 25 per cent. of expenditure under this scheme is reimbursable by the European Union.

Maternity and Paternity Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27294]

Mr. Jack: Maternity and paternity entitlements in the core department and its agencies, with the exception of the Meat Hygiene Service, follow those laid down in chapters 3.1 and 5 of the leave and attendance section of the civil service management code, a copy of which is to be found in the Library of the House. Such arrangements are provided in conjunction with the statutory entitlements available.

The majority of the staff of the MHS which was launched as an agency on 1 April 1995, transferred from local authorities. Accordingly, the agency has currently based its draft policy on local government conditions.

Consultants

Mrs. Hodge: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the level of expenditure on consultancy by *(a)* his Department and *(b)* agencies for

which his Department is responsible for (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what is projected for 1995–96. [25548]

Mr. Waldegrave: The total costs of consultants employed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and its executive agencies for the years 1993–94, 1994–95 and 1995–96 are detailed in the table. The figures for 1994–95 are provisional, and the figures for 1995–96 are current estimates. I will write to the hon. Member once the provisional figures are confirmed.

	1993–94	*1994–95*	*1995–96*
Core MAFF	10,288,234	7,161,186	7,625,378
ADAS	985,845	700,000	700,000
Central Veterinary Laboratory	463,037	354,909	350,000
Central Science Laboratory	149,731	195,861	150,000
Veterinary Medicines Directorate	34,281	12,704	5,000
Pesticide Safety Directorate	170,469	89,572	150,000
Meat Hygiene Service	n/a	475,000	434,000
Total	12,091,597	8,989,232	9,414,378

Contracting Out

Mrs. Hodge: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) for each piece of work subject to a bidding process under the auspices of *(a)* his Ministry and *(b)* agencies for which his Ministry is responsible (i) where work was contracted out who the successful bidders were and (ii) which contracts were won by in-house bidders in (1) 1993–94, (2) 1994–95 and (3) 1995–96; [25549]

(2) what work has been contracted out *(a)* by his Department and *(b)* by agencies for which his Department is responsible in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what is projected for 1995–96. [25547]

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department seeks to conduct its bidding processes in accordance with the consolidated guidelines for public purchasing policy laid down in chapter 31 of "Government Accounting". For the financial years 1993–94, 1994–95 and 1995–96 the information requested is as follows for the Ministry's market testing programme:

1993–94

	Successful bidders
(a) Contracted-out work	
Library Services (Books and Journals)	Dawson UK
	Swets UK
	Hammicks
	Blackwell
	National History Book Service
	Dillons
	Eastlake Information
General Recruitment (up to G7)	MSL Advertising
	PA Consulting
	Austin Knight
Research and Development (Part)	Whitbread Plc.
	Paterson Institute: Christie Hospital NHS
	Animal Health Trust
	A. E. Johnston
	Processors' and Growers' Research Organisation
	UMDS—Guys Hospital
	PE International
	Ashbourne Bio Sciences
	Cambridge Environmental Research Consultants
	RPS Clouston
	Land Research Associates
	W. S. Atkins
	Mylnefield Research Services Ltd.
Fisheries Protection: Surface Surveillance	Royal Navy
Radionuclide Analysis	National Radiological Protection Board
(b) Work won by in-house bidders	
Free Pollution Advice to Farmers	Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

1994–95

	Successful bidders
(a) Contracted-out work	
Inter-Despatch Service (IDS)	Security Facilities Executive
Term Commissions for Architectural and Engineering Design Services	Jefferson Sheard
	Rogers and Grundy
	Ferguson Bucknall Austin
	Lawrence Hewitt Partnership
Payroll and Associated Services	Chessington Computer Centre
Agronomic Evaluation of Set-Aside	Institute of Terrestrial Ecology (with British Trust for Ornithology and ADAS as sub-contractors)
Information Technology Outsourcing: MVS	Data Sciences
(a) Work won by in-house bidders	
In the 1994–95 market testing programme no contracts were won by in-house bidders in the Ministry.	

1995–96

To date no contracts have been awarded to either in-house bidders or external contractors in connection with the Ministry's market testing programme. It is not possible to predict in advance of recommendations following competition or efficiency review which services or functions will be contracted out.

Agency chief executives will reply separately to the hon. Member.

Letter from J. M. Walsh to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 25 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply direct to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question number 1291. In this you asked for information on what work has been contracted out in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what is projected for 1995–96.

ADAS was established as an Executive Agency in June 1992 and is jointly owned by MAFF and the Welsh Office.

ADAS operates as a commercial consultancy within the food, farming, land and leisure sectors. In-house facilities may not always be able to support the work of the Agency. In such cases additional support is sourced from outside the organisation. Typically, work in such areas as information technology, training, collaborative research, payroll and banking services, property and facilities management, document and promotional media creation and vehicle hire may be contracted out.

Letter from G. K. Bruce to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 8 June 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply, in respect of the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD), to your questions about the contracting out of work and the bidding process which is employed.

The Directorate has so far contracted out work on the evaluation of pesticides, IT consultancy and publications. The amount of work contracted out totalled £170,469 in 1993/94 and £89,572 in 1994/95. In 1995/96 the Directorate is likely to contract out approximately £150,000 worth of work.

The number of pieces of work subject to a bidding process was four in 1993/94 and four in 1994/95. The successful bidders over the two years were:

The Natural History Museum
Campden Food and Drink Research Association
ADAS
Central Science Laboratory
Severn Trent Laboratories
Desbrow, Thompson, Chaffe

All of these contracts were awarded to organisations outside PSD. It is anticipated that for 1995/96 the number of pieces of work which may be subject to a bidding process will be broadly similar to previous years.

Letter from P. I. Stanley to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 27 May 1995:

WORK SUBJECT TO A BIDDING PROCESS AND CONTRACTED OUT BY MAFF AND ITS AGENCIES

The Central Science Laboratory (CSL) was first launched as an executive agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in April 1992 and was re-launched as an enlarged agency two years later following its merger with the MAFF Food Science Laboratories.

CSL is currently located on five main sites in Berkshire, Hertfordshire, Surrey, Norfolk and Aberdeenshire with several smaller outstations throughout England. It is planned in the summer of 1996 to collocate the major part of CSL to a single site in Yorkshire where a new, purpose-built laboratory is at present under construction. CSL's market testing and contracting out strategy has been aimed at reviewing the wide range of services in connection with ensuring efficient and effective operation of the new laboratory at York.

You have asked two questions relating to the financial years 1993/94, 1994/95 and 1995/96; firstly about work that has been subject to a bidding process and secondly about work that has been contracted out. I can confirm that in 1993/94 and 1994/95 none of CSL's work was subject to a bidding process or contracted out. However, during the 1995/96 financial year, many support services including facilities management, security, catering, estate management, waste disposal, management of the day-care centre and fitness facilities and other services for the new laboratory at York will be subject to market testing and contracting out.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 27 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply for the Intervention Board to your Question about the outcome of market tests since 1993–94, as the matter is one within my operational responsibility.

Contracts were awarded as follows:

1993–94

Messengerial services, post-room services, word processing, reprographics and switchboard—in house team
Maintenance of Government-owned grain stores—Henry Boot Ltd
Analysis of olive oil—Agricultural Development & Advisory Service
Analysis of exported products—Campden & Chorleywood Food Research Association
Internal audit services, Newcastle—in house team
Analysis of livestock products—Agricultural Development & Advisory Service

1994–95

Document handling & security services Newcastle—in house team
Analysis of crops products—RHM Technology Ltd

1995–96

None to date.

Letter from Guy Stampleton to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 27 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply for the Intervention Board to your Question about work contracted out since 1993–94, as the matter is one within my operational responsibility.

New work strategically contracted out without an in-house bid:

Contracts awarded

1993–94

Maintenance of Government owned grain stores
Supervision of intake of cereals into store
Analysis of sugar
Analysis of exported products
Analysis of olive oil
Analysis of livestock products

1994–95

Travel services
Banking
Accounting systems development
Analysis of crops products

Contracts projected[1]

1995–96

Recruitment
Certification of accounts

[1] Strategic contracting out only. The outcome of market tests cannot be anticipated.

Letter from J. M. Rutter to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 23 May 1995:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about work which has been contracted out by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, as this is an operational matter for which I am responsible.

Other than the work subject to a bidding process, about which I have written to you separately today in response to your specific Parliamentary Question, no other work has been contracted out by the Directorate in either 1993/94 or 1994/95, and none is projected for 1995/96.

Letter from J. M. Rutter to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 23 May 1995:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about the outcome of work subjected to a bidding process by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, as this is an operational matter for which I am responsible.

In 1993–94, a contract for general office cleaning of the Directorate was awarded to Quality Assured Services. No contracts were awarded in 1994–95. but on 1 April 1995, a contract was awarded to the Analytical Chemistry Unit of the Central Veterinary Laboratory for the provision of analytical services required under the National Surveillance Scheme for residues in meat.

No in house bidders were involved in either of these contracts.

Letter from J. M. Walsh to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 25 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply direct to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question number 1286. In this you asked for information on the work subject to a bidding process, where work was contracted out, who the successful bidders were and ii) which contracts were won by in-house 1) 1993–94 and 2) 1994–95 and 3) 1995–96.

ADAS was established as an Agency in June 1992 under the joint ownership of MAFF and the Welsh Office. As an Agency, ADAS is not involved in market testing except where it bids for work from other Government Departments.

In respect of work (which has been interpreted as meaning the provision of works and services as distinct from goods and utilities) ADAS has the policy of subjecting to the bidding process a wide range of services. Thus far these include, collaborative research, consultancy, payroll and banking services, elements of laboratory analysis, areas of IT and telecommunications, and staff training.

Some of the above have been contracted out to independent third party contractors throughout the period. Unfortunately, to provide greater detail would be disproportionate cost to this Agency.

Staff

Ms Hodge: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what changes there have been in the number of staff employed by *(a)* the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and *(b)* agencies for which the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible, listing the changes in the number of staff agency by agency in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what changes are projected for 1995–96; [25061]

(2) how many posts were lost in *(a)* the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and *(b)* agencies for which the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food is responsible, listing the total lost posts agency by agency in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and how many posts are proposed to be lost in 1995–96; [25081]

(3) what changes there have been in the number of staff in employment by grade in *(a)* his Ministry and *(b)* each agency for which his Ministry is responsible in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96; [25623]

(4) how many staff of *(a)* the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and *(b)* agencies for which MAFF is responsible, were employed on a casual or short-term basis in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25489]

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on the number of casual staff employed in my Department in 1993–94, projected outturn for 1994–95, and plans for 1995–96 are published in my Department's annual report which is in the Library of the House. Separate information on posts is not available. No projections broken down by grade are available. I am asking the chief executives to reply for their agency.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Walsh to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 25 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply direct to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question number 1272. In this you asked for information on how many posts were lost in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and how many posts are proposed to be lost in 1995–96.

ADAS was established in June 1992 as an Agency jointly owned by MAFF and the Welsh Office.

Compared with the previous year the number of posts lost, within the Agency was as follows:

1993–94: 121 posts

1994–95: 392 posts

There are no proposed figures for 1995–96.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Walsh to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 25 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply direct to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question number 1271. In this you asked for information on what changes there have been in the number of staff employed in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what changes are projected for 1995–96.

ADAS was established as an Executive Agency in June 1992 and is jointly owned by MAFF and the Welsh Office.

My answer to this Parliamentary Question is the same given to PQ numbers 1272 and 1279. We do not have projected figures for 1995–96.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your Question about changes in the number of staff employed by this Agency since 1993–94 as the matter is one within my operational responsibility.

The average number of staff employed by the Agency was 983 in 1993–94, 973 in 1994–95, and is currently projected to be 991 in 1995–96.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of posts lost in this Agency since 1993–94 as the matter is one within my operational responsibility.

The Intervention Board does not operate a system of complemented posts. The Agency operates within the annual salary cost limits agreed with the Treasury which are within the running costs totals approved by Parliament. Salary budgets are delegated to line managers, who use an appropriate mix of permanent and casual staff and overtime to meet workloads. Staff year figures are given in the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food and the Intervention Board Departmental Report 1995 (CM 2803).

Letter from Dr. J. M. Rutter to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 23 May 1995:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about changes in the number of staff employed by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, as this is an operational matter for which I am responsible.

This information is published in Annex 6 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Departmental Report for 1995, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Rutter to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 23 May 1995:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about the number of posts lost in the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, as this is an operational matter for which I am responsible.

No posts were lost in the Directorate in 1993/94 or 1994/95, nor are any proposed to be lost in 1995/96.

Letter from T. W. A. Little to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated May 1995:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your questions about the number of staff employed and posts lost at the Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL).

The average number of staff employed is as follows:

	Permanent	*Casual*
1993–94	636	30
1994–95	621	41
1995–96	619	44½

The 1995/96 figure is at 1 April 1995. However, you may be aware of the merger of the CVL with MAFF's Veterinary Investigation Service which was announced by the Minister on 4 May. This will result in an increase of approximately 300 in Agency staff numbers and a reduction in MAFF's.

The posts lost are as follows:

	Number
1993/94	7
1994/95	5
1995/96 (estimate)	2

The figure for 1995/96 reflects losses already agreed but other posts may arise during the course of the year.

Letter from G. K. Bruce to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 8 June 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply, in respect of the Pesticides Safety Directorate (PSD), to a number of questions you have raised about appointments, staffing levels and retirements.

Information on the numbers of staff employed in the Agency in 1993–94, project outturn for 1994–95 and plans for 1995–96 are published in the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food's Annual Report which is in the Library of the House. PSD's Annual Report and Accounts, which is also available in the Library of the House, gives the total number of staff employed in the Agency and provides a general breakdown between scientific and administrative staff.

The number of staff who have left, or are projected to leave PSD under early retirement, voluntary redundancy, compulsory redundancy or on medical retirement are:

	1993/94	*1994/95*
(i) Early Retirement	0	1
(ii) Voluntary Redundancy	0	6
(iii) Compulsory Redundancy	0	7
(iv) Retired on Medical Grounds	0	0

It is not possible to project the number of staff who will leave PSD in the current financial year through the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme, redundancy or medical retirement.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what changes there have been in the number of staff in employment by grade in *(a)* his Ministry and *(b)* each agency for which his Ministry is responsible in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25623]

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on the numbers of staff employed in my Department in 1993–94, projected outturn for 1994–95, and plans for 1995–96 are published in my Department's annual report which is in the Library of the House. No projections broken down by grade are available. I am asking the chief executives to reply for their agency.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Rutter to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 24 May 1995:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about the changes in staffing by grade at the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, as this is an operational matter for which I am responsible.

The information you requested is set out in the attached table. Can I emphasise that the return is based on actual staff in post, both full time and part time, on 1 April for each of the financial years you identified. At 1 April 1995, some posts were vacant and the recruitment of replacements is being actively pursued.

Staff in Post

Grade	*1993–94*[1]	*1994–95*[2]	*1995–96*[3]
4	1	1	1
5	2	2	2
6	2	2	2
7	9.5	11.8	11.8
SROII	5	4	4
RO	7	7.8	6.8
POI	1	1	1
SEO	2	2	1
SSO	5	7.3	6.8
HEO	7	7	8
EO/AT	13.5	12.5	10.5
AO	14.5	18.2	16
AA	13	15.6	14.5
Typing manager	1	1	1
Typists	3.5	4.6	3.5
Personal secretaries	3	3	3
Messengers	2	2	2
	92	102.8	94.9

[1] As at 1 April 1993.
[2] As at 1 April 1994.
[3] As at 1 April 1995.

Letter from Dr. J. M. Walsh to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 22 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply direct to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question number 1279. In this you asked for details of the changes that there have been in the number of staff in employment by grade in i) 1993/95 and ii) 1994/95; and what the projected figures are for 1995/96.

I attach a sheet listing the details for 1993/94 and 1994/95. We do not have projected figures for 1995/96.

Grade	*Total 1993–94*	*Total 1994–95*
AA	216	136
AO	186	139
APPI	5	6
APPII	14	13
ASO	192	201
Assistant Librarian	1	1
Carpenter	1	—
Consultant	608	472
Craftsman	56	59
EO	56	42
Farm Manager	9	10
Grade 2	1	1
Grade 3	1	1
Grade 4	2	2
Grade 5	15	13
Grade 6	32	34
Grade 7	90	82
General Farm Worker	17	31
Graphics Officer	3	2
GOTGI	2	—
HEO	22	14
HGO	1	1
HMCO	7	7
HPO	1	2
HSO	45	36
Industrial	8	5
IT Specialist	15	10
Librarian	1	1
MCO	50	47
MCTGI	18	15
Photographic Officer	1	—
Personal Secretary	27	24
PTO	24	15
Student	22	18
SEO	7	7
SGBI	11	10
SGBII	28	24
SGBII (Cleaner)	25	17
SMCO	1	—
Scientific Officer	128	87
Senior Consultant	297	303
Senior IT Specialist	5	9
Senior Personal Secretary	3	3
Statistician—Senior		4
Sampler Tester	11	10
Team Leader	93	88
Typing Manager	1	1
Typist	137	99
Total	2,496	2,104

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your question about the number of staff by grade for 1993/94, 1994/95 and the projected figures for 1995/96 in the Intervention Board as this matter is within my operational responsibility.

The numbers of permanent and casual staff employed by the Agency in 1993–94, projected outturn for 1994–95, and plans for 1995–96 are published in the Departmental Report for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Intervention Board, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

A breakdown by grade for the last two financial years is below. The Agency's staffing for 1995/96 is being reviewed in the light of work changes, and no current projection by grade is therefore available.

Grade	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
G3	1	1
G5	5	5
G6	4	4
G7	21	23
SEO	46	47
HEO	113	111
EO	203	195
AO	406	391
AA	102	86
ADAS1	1	1
ADAS2	1	1
Personal Secretary	12	12
Chief Typing Manager	1	0
Typing Manager	2	1
Typist	18	14
Support Grade Band 1	9	8
Support Grade Band 2	22	18
Supt. TLX	1	1
Spec. TLX	4	3
Sub total	972	922
Casual staff	11	51
Total	983	973

The total of casual staff employed by the Agency are employed in the clerical grades. The figures provided are based on casual staff employed on short term work. Where casual staff are employed in established jobs while decisions are made about future overall staffing levels these are included in the overall grade totals.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff of *(a)* the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and *(b)* agencies for which the MAFF is responsible (i) took early retirement, (ii) took voluntary redundancy, (iii) took compulsory redundancy and (iv) were retired on medical grounds in (1) 1993–94 and (2) 1994–95; and what is the projected figure for 1995–96. [25474]

Mr. Waldegrave: The available information for core MAFF is as follows:

	1993–94	*1994–95*	*1995–96*[1]
Early retirement, voluntary redundancy and compulsory redundancy	40	130	200+
Medical retirement	52	44	25+

[1] Provisional estimate.

A detailed breakdown of the retirement and redundancy categories could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

MAFF's agencies will be replying direct by letters from chief executives.

Letter from T. W. A. Little to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated May 1995:

The Minister has asked me to reply to your questions about the number of staff employed at the Central Veterinary Laboratory (CVL) as well as other issues relating to early retirement and redundancy. I have also been asked to reply to your question about contracting-out of work and other work subject to a "bidding process". Your questions about expenditure on consultancy and the costs of redundancy/early retirement will, I understand, be answered by the Minister for the Department and its Agencies.

I have already provided you with the average number of staff employed at CVL throughout a given year. Further outturn information on the numbers of staff employed at CVL for the years in which you are interested is published in MAFFs Departmental Report which is in the Library of the House. Details by grade are not available.

Turning to information about staff medically retired, taking early retirement and redundancy etc, the information you require is as follows:

	1993–94	*1994–95*	*1995–96*
(i) Early retirement	1	—	—
(ii) Voluntary redundancy	5	5	[1]2
(iii) Compulsory redundancy	2	—	—
(iv) Medical retirement	2	7	[1]3

[1] Estimate.

You also asked about work that had been subject to a "bidding process" and work at CVL that has been contracted-out. In both cases you were interested in the information for the years 1993/94 and 1994/95 and proposals for 1995/96. CVL has a considerable number of contracts with private sector companies for the provision of services covering such areas as ground maintenance, refurbishment, cleaning and security. However, these have been in existence for many years and none have been let for the first time, contracted-out, during the years in which you are interested.

CVL has run a market testing programme and in 1993/94 the in-house Library team were awarded a Service Level Agreement for the provision of library services. In the following year, 1994/95, the in-house Messenger and Driver team and Waste Disposal and Incineration teams were also awarded Service Level Agreements to provide these services. All this work was won in open competition. No contracts previously carried out in-house were awarded to outside bidders. For 1995/96 no decisions have been taken to contract-out any in-house activities although we are constantly questioning the relative value of each of our services and whether they are most effectively discharged in-house or whether they should, instead, be out-sourced.

Letter from P. I. Stanley to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 22 May 1995:

Numbers of staff in MAFF and its agencies who took early retirement, voluntary and compulsory redundancy, or were retired on medical grounds in 1993/94 and 1994/95 with projections for 1995/96

The Central Science Laboratory (CSL) was first launched as an executive agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in April 1992 and was re-launched as an enlarged agency two years later following its merger with the MAFF Food Science Laboratories. The figures provided below therefore relate to the original CSL Agency for 1993/94 and the enlarged Agency thereafter.

	1993–94	1994–95	1995–96[1]
Voluntary Early Retirement	1	4	1
Voluntary Redundancy	0	0	0
Compulsory Redundancy	0	0	0
Medical Grounds Retirement	1	2	1

[1] Projected Figures. CSL is currently located on five main sites with several smaller outstations throughout England. It is planned in the summer of 1996 to collocate the major part of the Agency to a single site near York where a new, purpose-built laboratory is at present under construction. Details of the number of staff at existing sites wishing to relocate to York are not yet available but it is possible that a number of staff may wish instead to seek voluntary early retirement during 1995/96 or 1996/97.

Letter from J. M. Walsh to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 22 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply direct to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question number 1281. In this you asked for how many staff i) took early retirement ii) took voluntary redundancy and iii) took compulsory redundancy and iv) were retired on medical grounds in (1) 1993/94 and (2) 1994/95; and what is the projected figure for 1995/96.

ADAS was established in June 1992 as an Agency jointly owned by MAFF and the Welsh office.

Defining early retirement as applying to people age 50, and voluntary redundancy as applying to staff under age 50, the information for ADAS is as follows:

	1993–94	1994–95
(i) Early retirement	64	36
(ii) Voluntary redundancy	6	73
(iii) Compulsory redundancy	23	95
(iv) Medical retirement	12	9

There are no projected figures for 1995/96.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 22 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your Question about early retirement and redundancy in the Intervention Board, as this is a matter within my operational responsibility.

The figures for the last two financial years are:

	Number of staff	
	1993–94	1994–95
(i) Took approved early retirement	0	1
(ii) Took voluntary early retirement on compulsory terms	0	7
(iii) Took compulsory redundancy	0	0
(iv) Were retired on medical grounds	3	2

On the projected figures for 1995–96, in category (i) there is an approved early retirement scheme in progress, and it is anticipated that 2 officers will retire early on these terms. In category (ii), 13 staff have already taken voluntary early retirement on compulsory terms during the current financial year. However, it is not possible to give an accurate total projected number in this category at this stage. This is because the Intervention Board may run another voluntary early retirement scheme towards the end of the financial year, depending on revised manpower requirements following the implementation of a major accounts project and changes in intervention work. In addition, forecasting is particularly difficult because reduction in staff numbers in some areas and in some grades have to be counterbalanced by possible increases in new work in others. In category (iii), no compulsory redundancies are currently projected. In category (iv), it is impossible to give any total projections for retirement on medical grounds, because of the uncertainty and complexity of individual cases.

Letter from J. M. Rutter to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 23 May 1995:

PQ 4 17 MAY 1995

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about retirement and redundancy in the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, as this is an operational matter for which I am responsible.

The information you requested is set out in the table below:

	1993/94	1994/95	1995/96[1]
(i) Early retirement	0	3	0
(ii) Voluntary redundancy	0	0	0
(iii) Compulsory redundancy	0	0	0
(iv) Retired on medical grounds	0	0	0

[1] Projected.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many staff of *(a)* the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and *(b)* agencies for which MAFF is responsible, were employed on a casual or short-term basis in (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25489]

Mr. Waldegrave: Information on the numbers of casual staff employed in my Department in 1993–94, projected outturn for 1994–95, and plans for 1995–96 are published in my Department's annual report which is in the Library of the House. I am asking the chief executives to reply for their agency.

Letter from J. M. Rutter to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 24 May 1995:

PQ 8 17 MAY 1995

The Minister has asked me to reply to your question about the employment of casual or short term staff in the Veterinary Medicines Directorate, as this is an operational matter for which I am responsible.

This information is published in Annex 6 of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Departmental Report for 1995, a copy of which is in the Library of the House

Letter from J. M. Walsh to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 22 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture has asked me to reply direct to you in answer to your Parliamentary Question number 1285. In this you asked for how many staff were employed on a casual or short-term basis in i) 1993/94 and ii) 1994/95; and what are the projected figures for 1995/96.

ADAS is an agency of MAFF and the Welsh Office and was established in June 1992.

The number of staff on casual or fixed term basis in ADAS was 237 at 1 April 1994 and 257 at 1 April 1995.

Letter from Guy Stapleton to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated 22 May 1995:

The Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has asked me to reply to your question about the number of staff employed on a casual or short term basis in 1993/94, 1994/95 and the projected figures for 1995/96 in the Intervention Board as this matter is within my operational responsibility.

The numbers of permanent and casual staff employed by the Agency in 1993–94, projected outturn for 1994–95, and plans for

1995–96 are published in the Departmental Report for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Intervention Board, a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

The latest available figures are:

	Number of staff employed on a short term basis
1993/94	11
1994/95	51
1995/96	[1]17

[1] Projected. In addition 40 casual staff in 1993/94 and 37 casual staff in 1994/95 were employed in established jobs pending decisions about future overall staffing levels. For 1995/96 we envisage a reduction in the number of casual staff employed taking into account the need to recruit permanent staff into some areas and the reductions in numbers required following implementation of a new accounting system and an anticipated decline in intervention work.

Letter from Dr. P. I. Stanley to Ms Margaret Hodge, dated May 1995:

Details of the number of staff employed on a casual or short-term basis and changes in the number of staff employed in MAFF and its Agencies in 1993/94 and 1994/95, with projected 1995/96 figures.

The Central Science Laboratory (CSL) was first launched as an executive agency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) in April 1992 and was re-launched as an enlarged agency two years later following its merger with the MAFF Food Science Laboratories.

Information on the number of staff employed in CSL during 1993/94, projected outturn for 1994/95 and plans for 1995/96 are published in the MAFF Departmental Annual Report, a copy of which is held in the Library of the House. I am unable to provide the full detail you have requested as no projections broken down by grade are available and nor is separate information on posts.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 9 June 1995

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Faber: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many cases of BSE there have been in cattle born after the introduction of the ruminant protein ban in July 1988, by year of birth. [28358]

Mr. Waldegrave: As at 9 June, the number of confirmed BSE cases in Great Britain born after 18 July 1988, by year of birth, is:

Year of birth	*Number of confirmed BSE cases*
1988	9,983
1989	7,858
1990	1,589
1991	116
1992	1

EMPLOYMENT

New Earnings Survey

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the sample of employers responded to the 1994 new earnings survey in terms of *(a)* standard industrial classification and *(b)* region; and what proportion of former wages council industries responded. [27242]

Mr. Oppenheim: The overall response rate for the 1994 new earnings survey was 94 per cent. Non-respondents cannot be analysed by industrial classification or region.

Redundancy Payments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what approaches have been made to the redundancy payments fund by AST group companies or AST plc for assistance with the funding of redundancy payments to *(a)* training instructors and *(b)* others; what assessment he has made of the reasons given for the approaches; and if he will make a statement. [27893]

Mr. Oppenheim: All such approaches are treated in confidence.

ENVIRONMENT

Derelict Land Survey

Mr. Mans: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the results of the 1993 derelict land survey will be published. [28360]

Mr. Curry: The 1993 derelict land survey has been published today and copies have been placed in the Library. The report shows that the total amount of derelict land in England was 39,600 hectares on 1 April 1993, an overall reduction on 2 per cent. from 1988. Nearly 10,000 hectares of derelict land were reclaimed between 1988 and 1993 of which some 5,000 hectares were reclaimed with funding from my Department.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Fire Officers

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, pursuant to his answer of 8 March, column *217*, if he will make a statement on the recommendations for regrading in respect of fire officers set out in the fire strategy for the Palace of Westminster and parliamentary outbuildings approved by the relevant Committees of both Houses in 1993.

Mr. Beith *[holding answer 7 June 1995]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 30 March 1995, *Official Report*, columns *743–44*. The grading of these posts is the responsibility of the Metropolitan police pay and grading review team. No recommendations for regrading were made in the fire strategy for the Palace of Westminster and parliamentary outbuildings.

TRANSPORT

Night Flying

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what conclusions he has reached on the consultation on night flying restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted on the implications of the decision of the Court of Appeal to grant leave for a further judicial review; and if he will make a statement. [28327]

Dr. Mawhinney: I have today issued a supplement to the March 1995 consultation paper to meet points that have been made in the courts. I want to put my proposals in the clearest possible light. There was absolutely no intention to mislead.

The supplementary consultation paper is being sent to all those to whom we sent the March 1995 consultation paper, and to all those who responded. A copy has been placed in the Library. Comments are invited by 11 July. The proposals remain unchanged.

Rail Accident, Cowden

Mr. Wolfson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now publish the Health and Safety Executive inspector's report on the collision near Cowden, Kent on 15 October 1994. [26750]

Mr. Watts: The inspector's report into the rail accident at Cowden, Kent has been published today. Copies of the report have been placed in the Library.

The inspector is making his report in two parts. The first part, which is published today, addresses the adequacy of the safety mechanisms and procedures on the line and has been called for in advance of the coroner's

inquest in order to avoid delaying publication of the conclusions that are not dependent on the outcome of the inquest. The second part will address the question of who was driving the train at the time and will take account of the additional forensic evidence to be given at the inquest. This will be published by HSE after the conclusion of the inquest.

British Rail and Railtrack will consider all the recommendations carefully.

Bull Bars

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will examine the safety consequences of altering the design centre of gravity of vehicles resulting from the addition of bull bars. [27585]

Mr. Norris: The weight of a bull bar is unlikely to have any significant effect on the stability or braking capabilities of a vehicle.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what advice he gives to members of the public contemplating buying bull bars. [27586]

Mr. Norris: Information about the injury risk that bull bars may present is given in the Department's booklet "Choosing Safety". This contains a recommendation that people should think twice before buying a bull bar and should consider removing one already fitted.

Passenger and Freight Regulations

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to expand the responsibility and liability for the carriage of goods and passengers to *(a)* freight forwarders and *(b)* similar companies. [27662]

Mr. Norris: None.

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to ensure that goods and passengers are being carried legally on roadworthy vehicles and that drivers' hours regulations are being complied with; and if he will make a statement. [27663]

Mr. Norris: Vehicle roadworthiness and compliance with drivers' hours regulations are already regularly enforced by the Vehicle Inspectorate both at the roadside and at operators' premises.

Epilepsy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what considerations led the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency to require more information on an application to renew the driving licence of a person with epilepsy than for the original issue of the licence. [27774]

Mr. Norris: Provided a full declaration of the condition was made at the first application and there have been no changes since, no additional information is required of the applicant at renewal.

Road Accidents (Children)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many children were *(a)* killed and *(b)* injured in road traffic accidents in each of the last 10 years; and how many were so killed or injured while travelling to school. [27864]

Mr. Norris: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Children (aged 0–16) killed and injured in road accidents in Great Britain: 1984–93

	Total casualties		Of which travelling to or from school	
Accident Year	Killed	Injured	Killed	Injured
1984	710	64,000	68	11,433
1985	605	58,965	74	10,467
1986	552	56,201	81	10,249
1987	552	54,308	69	9,392
1988	545	54,655	57	8,948
1989	531	56,769	49	9,139
1990	511	56,776	44	9,121
1991	452	50,491	44	8,020
1992	378	49,880	42	8,235
1993	345	47,513	27	7,830

SCOTLAND

Parental Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27281]

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 8 June 1995]:* Entitlements are set out in chapters 3.1 and 5 of the civil service management code and are publicised through the departmental staff handbook. All staff eligible in terms of the code are entitled to three months and one week paid maternity leave as part of a total entitlement to 52 weeks paid and unpaid leave. Permanent staff are entitled to two days paid paternity leave while discretion is exercised for temporary and casual staff according to circumstances. In general, they are given the same benefits as permanent staff.

HEALTH

Dental Services

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 5 April to the hon. Member for Carshalton and Wallington (Mr. Forman), *Official Report*, columns *1213–15*, (1) which of the reforms outlined will address levels of oral health in areas of social deprivation; [27333]

(2) what assessment she has made of the findings of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's review of dental remuneration, paragraphs 5.3 and 6.6, on the effect of the remuneration system on dental practitioners serving comparatively poor patients in a comparatively rich region, with particular reference to inner London; [27335]

(3) what further progress she has made in respect of the findings of the fourth report of the Health Committee of Session 1992–93—HC264—on dental services, in paragraphs 25, 45 and 145, on geographical and social class inequities in oral health; [27334]

(4) what plans she has to accept the recommendations of the Bloomfield review and fourth report of the Health Committee of Session 1992–93 on dental services on funding and dentistry should be through locally sensitive channels; and whether the amounts given to each locality will be weighted with respect to social deprivation. [27336]

Mr. Malone: The package of reforms to dental services I announced on 5 April restate the Government's long-term aim of introducing a pilot system of local purchasing for dentistry when legislative time allows. Under local purchasing, health authorities will be able to assess the needs of the local population and tailor provision of dental care accordingly.

Pilot schemes will look at appropriate channels for the allocation of funding, and social deprivation will be among the issues to be considered. In the interim, the reforms we intend to make to the capitation system for children will target resources on children with poor oral health. This change will be of particular assistance to dentists practising in areas of social deprivation.

Blood Transfusion Centres

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what representations she has received regarding *(a)* proposals of the London and south-east blood authority administration zone to retain the Brentwood blood transfusion centre and close Cambridge blood transfusion centre and *(b)* the proposed resignation of the director of the London and south-east blood authority over disagreements with the National Blood Authority chief executive; [27266]

(2) whether new proposals for the rationalisation of the National Blood Authority, including the merger of the Brentwood and Cambridge blood transfusion centres, will be the subject of national consultation; [27267]

(3) what representations she has received from the chief executive of the National Blood Authority regarding *(a)* the sale of the Brentwood blood transfusion centre and *(b)* the merger of the Brentwood and Cambridge blood transfusion centres. [27265]

Mr. Sackville: The revised proposals of the National Blood Authority, following extensive consultation, have yet to be received. These are expected shortly. Matters concerning the internal management of the national blood service are a matter for the authority.

Blood Stocks

Mr. Illsley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what was the total level of blood stocks on 24, 25, 26 and 27 May. [27264]

Mr. Sackville: According to figures provided by the National Blood Authority, the total levels of blood stocks held at transfusion centres were:

24 May: 18,252 units
25 May: 17,881 units
26 May: 16,167 units
30 May: 18,782 units

Information for 27 May, 28 May and 29 May is not available as data are not collected on Saturdays, Sundays and bank holidays.

Emergency Ambulance Calls

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment her Department has made of the reasons for the increase in 999 emergency ambulance calls in recent years. [27388]

Mr. Sackville: The Department has made no formal assessment, but continues to monitor levels of demand.

NHS Hospital Private Wards

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many dedicated private wards have opened in NHS hospital trusts in the past year; [27420]

(2) how many dedicated private wards there are in NHS hospital trusts. [27423]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not collected centrally. Some relevant information is published annually in Laing's review of private health care, copies of which are available in the Library.

NHS Trusts

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has in respect of non-executive NHS trust board members who hold a private medical insurance policy; and if she will make a statement. [27419]

Mr. Malone: None. Non-executive members of national health service boards are not asked to provide information on their private insurance arrangements.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to reduce the number of community health councils by a process of amalgamation. [27861]

Mr. Malone: There are no plans to reduce the number of community health councils.

Existing regulations state that it is the responsibility of regional health authorities to determine the number of established community health councils. In this respect, the region's priority is to ensure that CHCs are able to reflect the views of the communities they serve. In considering any changes to CHC boundaries, the first consideration must be to ensure that the CHC best serves local interests.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) pursuant to her answer of 6 February, *Official Report*, column 27, if she will provide figures for 1994–95 on the number of accident and emergency departments; [27534]

(2) pursuant to her answer of 23 February, *Official Report*, column *325*, if she will provide regional information on accident and emergency departments for 1994–95. [27531]

Mr. Sackville: Information about accident and emergency services in 1994–95 will be available in the autumn.

Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the dates when consultations took place between her Department and the Royal College of Psychiatrists prior to the publication of the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill. [27406]

Mr. Bowis: The college gave written and oral evidence to the Department's review of legal powers on the care of mentally ill people in the community. It was one of the bodies invited to comment on the report of the review which was published in August 1993, and responded on 27 October 1993. Officials have had regular meetings with the college since then.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what estimates she has made of the number of people who will be subject to a supervised discharge order

under the proposals of the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill. [27408]

Mr. Bowis: A survey commissioned by the Department in 1993 suggested that at any one time there might be about 3,000 patients in England who would be considered suitable for a provision of this kind.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what assessment she has made of whether any of the new powers proposed in the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill are inconsistent with the European convention on human rights; and if she will make a statement. [27411]

Mr. Bowis: The provisions of the Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill take full account of advice to us on the effect of the European convention on human rights in this area and we are satisfied that they are entirely consistent with the convention.

Medium Secure Unit Beds

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many regional medium secure unit beds per head of population, nationally and for each regional authority, there were in each year since 1989; [27407]

(2) how many regional medium secure unit beds per head of population there were in each London district health authority in each year since 1989. [27410]

Mr. Bowis: Information will be placed in the Library showing the number of purpose-built secure places funded from the central capital programme in each region and the ratio to the region's population. Medium secure units are not always used exclusively by patients from the region in which the unit is located. Information is not available for individual districts.

There are also about 450 places nationally in interim secure psychiatric units, many of which are of medium secure standard, and others which are funded by health authorities in independent sector facilities. Information on these places by region and district over the period since 1989 is not available centrally.

There were no purpose-built national health service medium secure places in 1979, despite the fact that the Glancy committee had recommended them in its 1974 report.

Mental Health Expenditure

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much in real terms was spent on NHS mental health services, in total and as a proportion of overall NHS expenditure in each year since 1978. [27409]

Mr. Bowis: Information in the form requested is not available. National health service expenditure on mental health services from 1978–79 to 1990–91 is shown in the table.

NHS expenditure on mental illness for England

	Mental illness expenditure cash prices £ million	*Mental illness expenditure 1993–94 prices £ million*	*Mental illness as a proportion of total hospital and community health services expenditure Percentage*
1978–79	489.8	1,403.1	11.12
1979–80	592.8	1,455.1	11.16
1980–81	774.5	1,606.7	11.31
1981–82	860.0	1,626.8	11.34
1982–83	916.0	1,617.5	11.33
1983–84	965.1	1,628.7	11.27
1984–85	1,028.6	1,652.8	11.35
1985–86	1,077.3	1,641.2	11.31
1986–87	1,149.2	1,699.4	11.24
1987–88	1,302.2	1,828.4	11.65
1988–89	1,556.5	2,048.4	12.50
1989–90	1,661.7	2,044.1	12.34
1990–91	1,785.1	2,033.1	12.07
1991–92	2,185.3	2,341.8	11.58
1992–93	2,350.3	2,422.2	11.56
Provisional			
1993–94	2,321.6	2,321.6	10.87

Since 1991–92, changes in material accounting practices—for example, the introduction of capital charges—mean that later figures are not comparable with the earlier ones. On the new basis, the figures since 1991–92 are shown in the table.

Notes:

1. The figures for 1993–94 are provisional and subject to revision. As such, they are not comparable with the earlier, final figures.
2. The GDP deflator was used to calculate the 1993–94 prices.
3. The mental illness expenditure is made up of the following:

(a) in-patient and out-patient expenditure; the consultant specialties of mental illness child and adolescent psychiatry, forensic psychiatry, psychotherapy and old age psychiatry;

(b) day patient expenditure; in the categories, mental illness—alcoholism, drug abuse, psychogeriatrics and general—child and adolescent psychiatry and forensic psychiatry;

(c) community nursing expenditure.

Schizophrenics

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people diagnosed as schizophrenic have had access to a community psychiatric nurse in each regional health authority in each of the last five years. [27412]

Mr. Bowis: This information is not available centrally.

Nursing Staff

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department issues guidelines for NHS trusts concerning recommended maximum turnover rates of nursing staff. [27413]

Mr. Sackville: No. Decisions concerning staffing, including maximum turnover rates, are a matter for local determination.

Psychiatric Beds

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many general psychiatric beds per head of population there have been in London, Leeds, Sheffield, Manchester, Birmingham and Newcastle upon Tyne in each year since 1989. [27416]

Mr. Bowis: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Dulwich (Ms Jowell) on 28 April, *Official Report*, column *718*.

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many community psychiatric nurses there were in total and per capita in each regional health authority in each of the last five years. [27417]

Mr. Sackville: The information available about nurses working in psychiatric areas in the community who are employed by the national health service will be placed in the Library.

Correspondence

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when the hon. Member for Walsall, North will receive a reply to his letter of 18 April regarding health workers' pay, reference H6/4593/44. [27438]

Mr. Malone: I replied on 8 June.

NHS Staff

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the total amount spent on NHS staff wages and salaries, per profession, for the last year for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement. [26739]

Mr. Malone: *[holding answer 7 June 1995]:* Provisional information on 1993–94 national health service staff salary costs for health care professions is shown in the table. Final figures will be published in the October 1995 edition of "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics".

Provisional expenditure on salaries and wages by profession by health authorities and NHS trusts in England 1993–94

	Expenditure £000s
Medical	2,166,152
Dental	74,969
Nurses and midwives	6,134,014
Professions allied to medicine	700,936
Professional and scientific	242,854
Professional and technical	666,225

Source:

1. The annual financial returns of district and regional authorities and the special health authorities of the London postgraduate hospitals. The annual financial returns of NHS trusts.

Notes:

1. Salaries and wages costs incurred by family health services authorities are excluded as corresponding costs are not identified on the same basis.

2. Salary costs are the gross pay costs of directly employed staff including employers' national insurance and superannuation contributions.

3. Project 2000 nurse costs and the costs of employing agency nurses are excluded.

Prescriptions

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many NHS prescriptions for the treatment of epilepsy were dispensed in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and how many of those prescriptions were for products that were licensed *(a)* within the last five years, *(b)* more than 10 years ago and *(c)* more than 20 years ago. [22840]

Mr. Malone *[pursuant to his reply, 17 May 1995, c.282]:* I regret that the information in one of the tables was given in error.

A corrected copy has now been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Defence Research Agency

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when the decision was taken to introduce a new accounting system into to the Defence Research Agency; who took the decision; which company was awarded the contract; and what is its value. [27548]

Mr. Freeman: Introducing a commercial accounting system was an integral part of setting up the Defence Research Agency as a next steps agency in April 1991, and is a particular Government requirement for creating a trading fund which the DRA became two years later. The original decision to commission work on the system was taken in 1989 by the Ministry of Defence and the investment appraisal for the system approved in 1990. A number of companies have assisted with the work with the principle systems implementation contract, worth £7 million between 1990 and 1994, being awarded to Coopers and Lybrand.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence who is the current chief executive of the Defence Research Agency; when he was appointed; and who was his previous employer. [27549]

Mr. Freeman: The Defence Research Agency was formally incorporated into the enlarged Defence Evaluation and Research Agency on 1 April 1995. John Chisholm, who was appointed chief executive of the DRA on 15 July 1991, was invited by the Secretary of State for Defence to be chief executive of DERA. Previously, Mr. Chisholm had been United Kingdom managing director of SEMA group plc.

Bosnia

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates in the last 12 months the rules of engagement for British troops serving in Bosnia have been changed. [27695]

Mr. Soames: The rules of engagement for British troops in Bosnia are reviewed as required, to ensure that personnel can take appropriate action in self-defence. For operational reasons, however, it would not be appropriate to go into detail.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify *(a)* the total number of United Kingdom troops who will be deployed to Bosnia following recent discussions with European allies, *(b)* the command structure under which they will operate and *(c)* the numbers and type of military equipment being sent to Bosnia. [27697]

Mr. Soames: Some 1,000 additional British troops are currently deploying to Bosnia as part of a reinforcement package. The main elements are 19 Field Regiment, equipped with 105 mm light guns, 31 Armoured Engineer Squadron and elements of 21 Engineer Regiment, with road maintenance, mine clearance and bridge building equipment, and two Lynx helicopters equipped with tube-launched optically steered wire guided—TOW—anti-tank missiles. In addition, 24 Airmobile Brigade, which is over 5,000 strong, has been offered to the UN as part of the rapid reaction force, and discussions are continuing about its deployment. Its equipment includes Lynx, Gazelle, Chinook and Puma helicopters, TOW and Milan anti-tank and Javelin surface-to-air missile systems, together with 8 mm mortars and 105 mm light guns. I do not propose to give details of equipment numbers for operational reasons. British reinforcements will be part of UN forces in Bosnia and will come under UN command.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the operational tasks and mission goals of the additional British troops being deployed to Bosnia. [27699]

Mr. Soames: The British reinforcements will enhance the effectiveness and the protection of the United Nations protection force and will operate under the existing humanitarian and peacekeeping mandate.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what equipment his American counterpart has offered to the rapid reaction force in Bosnia. [27778]

Mr. Soames: The US has indicated that it is prepared to offer attack helicopters, radars, communications equipment and night vision devices, together with strategic air lift assets to help with the deployment of allies' heavy equipment.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the estimated cost of the proposed rapid reaction force deployment to Bosnia; and who is financially responsible for the deployment. [27696]

Mr. Soames: The proposed rapid reaction force consists of three separate tranches, two of which have deployed. The precise duration of the deployment has yet to be decided, but on an annual basis the additional cost would be of the order of £271,000,000. In accordance with established interdepartmental arrangements, the costs of the first two tranches—about £26,000,000—will be met by the Foreign and Commonwealth Offices which will seek reimbursement from the UN. Discussions on who would have financial liability for the proposed third tranche are still continuing.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will specify the international troop contributions to the rapid reaction force deployments in Bosnia. [27698]

Mr. Soames: The French have indicated that they will make 1,500 troops available and have placed another 4,000 on standby. Other offers include a Dutch mortar company and mortar locating group of some 170 personnel; a 70-strong Canadian support weapon unit; a Spanish mortar element of some 35 personnel; and a 20-strong New Zealand group which includes a mortar section, together with medical and logistic support personnel.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if British troops are still operating under conditions of wider peacekeeping in Bosnia. [27700]

Mr. Soames: British troops in Bosnia continue to operate under UNPROFOR's humanitarian and peacekeeping mandate.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence to which military hospitals in Britain United Kingdom soldiers injured in Bosnia will be taken. [27779]

Mr. Soames: On arrival in the UK, service casualties from Bosnia will normally be taken initially to the Princess Alexandra RAF hospital, Wroughton, before onward transfer to an appropriate service hospital or specialist NHS unit. However, where the patients' medical conditions dictate, casualties may be taken direct to an NHS specialist unit. The nature of the injury and the location of the family will determine to which other hospital a casualty is transferred for further treatment.

TREASURY

Maternity and Paternity Leave

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what maternity and paternity entitlements are available to employees within his Department. [27277]

Mr. Nelson *[holding answer 8 June 1995]:* Women, both full and part time, who have been in paid service with the Treasury for at least one year and who are not employed on a casual, standby or short notice appointment, nor employed on a fixed-term appointment of less than two years, are entitled to three months and one week paid maternity leave, including statutory maternity pay, on the proviso that they plan to resume duty. An additional period of up to 39 weeks' unpaid leave is also available, giving a combined total of up to 52 weeks paid and unpaid maternity leave. Staff who qualify for maternity leave as described have a right of return to work.

Although not an entitlement, staff may also be eligible to take a career break of up to five years in addition to maternity leave.

Reasonable time off is allowed for antenatal care, which is paid at the normal rate of pay.

Fathers are entitled to two days' paid paternity leave, which can be made available either at the time of the birth or in the weeks following the birth if this is more convenient to the family.

Extra-statutory Payments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *91*, what form of notification is made and authorisation sought from his Department by spending Departments before extra-statutory payments are made. [27820]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Arrangements for the authorisation of extra-statutory payments and for notification vary between Departments and agencies. In common with other forms of special payment, the Treasury may agree specific delegation levels with Departments for extra-statutory payments. The rules on the notation of special payments in appropriation accounts are set out in paragraph 12.6.18 of "Government Accounting".

Economic Statistics

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) what has been the average annual rate of export growth in real terms for each of the EC and Group of Seven countries over the period 1979 to 1993; [25199]

(2) what was the average ratio over the period 1979 to 1993 in current prices of investment to gross domestic product for each EC and G7 country; [25201]

(3) what was the average ratio over the period 1979 to 1993 in current prices of imports to gross domestic product for each EC and G7 country; [25200]

(4) what has been the average annual rate of growth in real terms of gross domestic product for each of the EC and G7 countries over the period 1979 to 1993. [25202]

Mr. Nelson: G7 and EC growth, investment, export and import data can be found in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development publication "National Accounts 1960–1993", volume 1.

The average annual GDP growth, export growth, investment to GDP ratio and imports to GDP ratio for the G7 and EC countries from 1979 to 1993 are given in the tables. The selective period chosen by the hon. Gentleman extends between different points in economic cycles, particularly in the case of the UK, and therefore renders comparisons less meaningful.

	Annual average export volume growth 1979–1993 (Percentage)	*Average annual GDP growth 1979–1993 (Percentage)*
G7		
US	5.4	2.3
Canada	5.4	2.2
Japan	5.9	3.6
France	3.7	1.8
Italy	3.6	2.0
UK	2.9	1.7
W. Germany	5.0	2.0
Rest of EC		
Austria	2.1	4.5
Belgium	1.8	4.0
Denmark	1.7	4.5
Finland	1.6	3.5
Greece	1.4	5.5
Ireland	3.7	8.5
Luxembourg	3.0	3.7
Netherlands	1.8	3.9
Portugal	2.6	5.9
Spain	2.4	5.9
Sweden	1.2	3.4

	Investment to GDP average ratio 1979–1993	*Imports to GDP average ratio 1979–93*
G7		
US	18.3	10.8
Canada	21.1	25.9
Japan	29.9	10.4
France	20.7	22.1
Italy	20.8	21.4
UK	17.4	26.3
W. Germany	20.9	26.3
Rest of EC		
Austria	24.0	37.7
Belgium	18.0	69.2
Denmark	17.6	32.2
Finland	18.0	27.7
Greece	19.9	30.8
Ireland	20.4	55.1
Luxembourg	22.2	90.4
Netherlands	20.3	49.9
Portugal	28.4	37.1
Spain	21.5	19.7
Sweden	19.0	30.6

Works of Art

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many owners hold works of art granted exemption from inheritance tax where viewing of the object is by appointment only. [26724]

Sir George Young: Seven hundred and four owners of chattels which have been granted conditional exemption from inheritance tax or capital transfer tax have undertaken to satisfy the public access requirement by entry on the register of conditionally exempt works of art. These owners are required to make the chattels available for viewing by members of the public, by appointment. Works of art and other objects on the register may also, unless this cannot be done without physical risk to the object, be borrowed by curators or directors of public collections.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fire Brigades

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has had from *(a)* the Fire Brigades Union, *(b)* local authorities and *(c)* others in relation to the proposed reduction in the number of fire brigades in Wales. [27892]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The decision to create three brigades in Wales in place of the existing eight was announced in the White Paper "Local Government in Wales: A Charter for the Future" in March 1993. The areas to be included in each brigade were announced in December 1993. Since then my right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representation from local authority interests and others about the brigade structure in Wales. The Fire Brigades Union has made representations through its membership of the local government review sub-committee of the Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council.

Mentally Ill Prisoners

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what new proposals he has to improve the care of the mentally ill in prison *(a)* before sentence and *(b)* after sentence. [27588]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 9 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about what new proposals we have to improve the care of the mentally ill in prison (a) before sentence and (b) after sentence.

The Prison Service will continue to seek to transfer to psychiatric hospitals those mentally disordered prisoners who meet the criteria laid down in the Mental Health Act 1983. Performance in this respect has greatly improved in recent years but some needs are still not being met.

The Department of Health will spend over £47 million between 1991 and 1995 to increase the number of medium secure beds from the 1993 figure of 653 to nearly 1200 by 1996. In addition, health authorities are developing further secure psychiatric places.

The Department of Health and the Prison Service have commissioned a study of the transfer process to identify actions that could make this operate more smoothly. A sub committee of the independent Health Advisory Committee to the Prison Service is also looking into the problems which may occur during the assessment and transfer process. It will then examine the arrangements for mentally disordered prisoners' aftercare. We shall consider very carefully any recommendations arising from these studies.

The Prison Service is also improving the quality of care and treatment for those mentally disordered offenders who remain in prison custody. The largest group of mentally disordered prisoners, who may not meet the Mental Health Act criteria for transfer to hospital, are those suffering from personality disorder. The principal recommendation of a Task Force, set up to determine the strategy for treating such prisoners, was that a second therapeutic prison, along the lines of Grendon, should be established. We are now giving high priority to the implementation of that recommendation.

We are also pursuing a range of other initiatives to improve the quality of treatment offered to prisoners suffering from mental disorders. For example, we plan to extend the "contracting in" of psychiatric services beyond the Durham and Bristol clusters of establishments to others. We shall develop and publish a new Healthcare Standard for the provision of forensic psychiatric services and for throughcare in mental health. We will also be auditing the implementation of Healthcare Standard 2 (Mental Health Services in local prisons and remand centres) at each establishment.

Prisoners' (Incentives and Privileges)

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement about the proposed national framework for incentives and earned privileges for prisoners. [28437]

Mr. Howard: A national framework for incentives and earned privileges for prisoners will be introduced across the prison system in England and Wales during 1995. It will ensure that prisoners earn privileges by responsible behaviour and participation in hard work and other constructive activity. More than 30 prisons will be implementing approved incentives and earned privileges schemes from July 1995. Amendments to prison and young offender institution rules will need to be in force from July and will be laid before Parliament later this month.

The national framework will include the following elements:

(a) a clear set of national aims for incentives and earned privileges;

(b) a list of key earnable privileges and instructions on their use, where they are provided at all;

(c) instructions on the arrangements for the earning and losing of rewards. These will cover defining and measuring behaviour, decision making, appeals and administrative powers to remove privileges where prisoners do not meet the specified criteria for earning them. Governors will continue to have the disciplinary powers of forfeiture of privileges, recently increased from 28 to 42 days for specific offences; and

(d) a system of effective monitoring and auditing.

There will be four key earnable privileges which, where provided at all, prisoners will have to earn within national instructions. These benefits, which will form the basis of three broad privilege levels to which prisoners will be allocated, are:

(a) access to private cash above set minima;

(b) extra or improved visits;

(c) eligibility to participate in enhanced earning schemes; and

(d) earned community visits—previously town visits—but only for category D prisoners and female prisoners and young offenders suitable for outside activities.

There will also be two key earnable privileges which will normally operate when all prisoners in a particular part of a prison have the same level of privilege. They are:

(e) own clothes. But women and the unconvicted will continue to have the option of wearing their own clothes; and

(f) time out of cell for association.

Changes in policy on private cash will be introduced in parallel to, and as part of, the phased introduction of the earned privileges policy. Prisoners will be able to spend their earnings but will be limited in the amounts they can spend from private cash according to their performance under incentives and earned privileges schemes.

Convicted prisoners will have their access to private cash capped at the rate of £2.50, £10 or £15 per week for the basic, standard and enhanced privilege levels respectively. Unconvicted prisoners will be able to spend more—£15 on basic and £30 on standard and enhanced levels—reflecting their unconvicted status. Exceptions will be made to meet a range of special circumstances

such as those arising from legal proceedings; spending on telephone cards for foreign nationals; and clothing in establishments where prisoners wear their own and to meet the needs of mothers and babies. But, overall, the new arrangements will reduce prisoners' general purchasing power where this has been excessive in the past.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Chernobyl

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade which United Kingdom companies are involved in the consortium to be funded by a European Union loan to close the Chernobyl nuclear plant and provide a replacement gas-fired power plant. [27895]

Mr. Eggar: No European Union loan has been offered to Ukraine for the construction of a gas-fired power plant to replace Chernobyl. I understand that a consortium led by Asea Brown Boveri, the international electrical engineering company, has made a proposal to the Ukrainian Government to build such a plant. I am not aware that any UK companies are involved in this consortium.

Disqualified Directors

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will state the number of directors disqualified as a result of action taken by the Newcastle upon Tyne official receiver office in each of the last five years. [27542]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The numbers of directors disqualified under section 6 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986 as a result of action taken by the official receiver, Newcastle upon Tyne office in each of the last five years were as follows:

Financial year	*Number of cases*	*Number of respondents*	*Number of years (total)*
1990–91	7	10	75
1991–92	8	12	73
1992–93	10	15	77
1993–94	8	13	64
1994–95	15	23	120

Insolvency Service

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to take a decision on the size and location of the Insolvency Service as a result of the contracting-out process; what is the proposed contracting-out timetable for the functions of the official receiver; and when he expects to publish the draft contract specifications. [27544]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The final decision as to whether contracting out will proceed will be taken following receipt of formal bids in mid-November. Any contracts will be awarded by the end of December and will be fully operational by 1 April 1996. Decisions in relation to the size and location of the Insolvency Service will be made in the light of conclusions on contracting out.

The draft contract specification will be made available to selected potential bidders on 15 June 1995.

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will publish the views of the official receiver on the draft specifications for the privatisation of the Insolvency Service. [27546]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: There are no plans to publish the views of the official receivers on the draft specification. Their views have been sought and taken into account by the consultants, Shreeveport Management Consulting, in preparing the specification which will be issued to selected potential bidders.

Official Receiver's Office, Newcastle

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many *(a)* permanent and *(b)* casual staff have been employed at the Newcastle upon Tyne office of the official receiver in each of the last five years. [27543]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Staff numbers have varied during the course of the years, but the maximum numbers of staff employed at the official receiver, Newcastle upon Tyne office in each of the last five years were as follows:

Financial year	*Permanent*	*Casual*
1990–91	35	1
1991–92	32	2
1992–93	33	6
1993–94	33	15
1994–95	34	11

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to *(a)* close or *(b)* relocate the official receiver's office in Newcastle upon Tyne. [27545]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Any plans in relation to the official receiver's office in Newcastle upon Tyne will be made in the light of decisions on contracting out.

Mr. Byers: To ask the president of the Board of Trade how many *(a)* bankruptcy orders *(b)* winding up orders have been dealt with by the Newcastle upon Tyne official receiver's office in each of the last five years. [27547]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The total numbers of bankruptcy orders and winding up orders dealt with by the official receiver, Newcastle upon Tyne office in each of the last five years were as follows:

Financial year	*Bankruptcy*	*Winding up*
1990–91	309	126
1991–92	441	157
1992–93	572	153
1993–94	528	131
1994–95	395	104

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Gibraltar

Mr. Cox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the minutes of the meeting which recently took place between him and the Chief Minister of Gibraltar are to be published. [26913]

Mr. David Davis: There are no plans to publish any minutes of the meeting.

PRIME MINISTER

Ministerial Salaries

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Prime Minister what is his current annual salary; and what is the salary of the Lord Chancellor. [27667]

The Prime Minister: In relation to my ministerial salary, I refer the hon. Gentleman to the Ministerial and Other Salaries Order 1994, SI 1994/3206, a copy of which is available in the House of Commons Library. In addition, I have a reduced parliamentary salary entitlement of £24,985. The Lord Chancellor's salary entitlement is currently £126,138.

Inland Revenue Training Centre

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Prime Minister what was the purpose of his visit to the Inland Revenue training centre, Lincoln on 1 June; what facilities he used; and if he will make a statement. [27587]

The Prime Minister: I have never visited the Inland Revenue training centre at Lincoln.

Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill

Mr. McFall: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *681*, to the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Mr. Chidgey), how many *(a)* letters and *(b)* cards he has received regarding parliamentary time for the Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill. [27759]

The Prime Minister: I have nothing further to add to my reply to the hon. Member for Eastleigh, on 25 May, *Official Report*, column *681*.

Honours

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister (1) in each year year since 1990, how many people who were approached said that they would not accept a knighthood or the title Dame if one were offered; [27692]

(2) in each since 1990, how many people who were approached said that they would not accept a peerage if one were offered. [27693]

The Prime Minister: It is not the practice to reveal this information.

Responses to Policy Changes

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Prime Minister if, as part of his policy of open government, he will require all Ministers, when requesting observations on proposed changes of policy indicated in consultation or similar papers, to ask those responding whether or not they agree to their responses being made public. [27877]

The Prime Minister: It is normal practice for consultation documents to include a statement that responses received may be made public unless respondents request that their comments be treated as confidential.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Grafton Recruitment

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 23 May, *Official Report*, column *534*, if he will give details of the two licences issued to Grafton Recruitment. [26578]

Mr. Moss: Under the provisions of the Nursing Homes and Nursing Agencies Act (Northern Ireland) 1971, anyone carrying on a nursing agency on any premises must hold a licence issued by the Department. Two such licences have been issued to Grafton Recruitment. These authorise Dr. Mary Paula Jane King Kilbane and Mr. Kenneth John Thomas Belshaw to carry on a nursing agency at premises in Belfast and Londonderry. The licences are valid up to and including 31 December 1995 and are renewable.

In issuing or renewing licences, the Department has to be satisfied that the conditions laid down in the Act and the Nursing Agencies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1986 are being complied with.

Staff of the Northern Ireland health and personal social services are required to make a declaration of interests either on starting employment or on acquisition of the interest(s), whichever is appropriate. Dr. Kilbane's interest in Grafton Recruitment had been fully disclosed to her employer, the Eastern health and social services board, before she took up her appointment as chief executive on 1 April 1995.

Information on the use made of nursing agencies is not held centrally. However, in order to clarify Grafton Recruitment's involvement with the health and personal social services, employers have now been asked to supply details of any contracts placed with that organisation. I shall convey the results of this to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Healthy Eating

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list his Department's projects aimed at promoting healthy eating, indicating the cost of each project to his Department. [26301]

Mr. Moss: Projects aimed at promoting healthy eating are carried out by a variety of health and other organisations in Northern Ireland and details of all such projects are not held centrally. Regional projects undertaken by the Northern Ireland Health Promotion Agency and associated costs in 1994–95 are as follows:

	£
Food and Nutrition Strategy	7,177
Handbook on Nutrition	747
Healthy Eating Circle	54,317
Healthy Eating Campaign	56,390
Nutrition Education	14,837
National Food Selection Guide	359
School Nutrition Action Group	2,854
No Sweets at Checkouts	155
General Information	877
General Research	2,862
Total	140,575

Local Government Employees

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the public service offices other than local government offices and the number of persons employed in such offices in Fermanagh district council in *(a)* January 1992, *(b)* January 1993, *(c)* January 1994 and *(d)* January 1995.

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

Office	*January 1992*	*January 1993*	*January 1994*	*January 1995*
Department Finance and Personnel				
Northern Bank Chambers, Townhall street, Enniskillen	12	12	12	11
County buildings, East Bridge street, Enniskillen	—	—	—	1
Department Agriculture				
Riversdale, Ballinamallard	66	66	62	57
Inishkeen house, Enniskillen	76	74	79	75
Drumbane, Kesh	2	2	2	2
Gola road, Lisnaskea	4	4	5	5
Enniskillen College of Agriculture	41	40	36	34
Lisnaskea Forest	8	9	8	10
Castlecaldwell Forest	7	7	8	11
Lough Navar Forest	10	9	11	9
Florencecourt Forest	14	13	14	13
Kesh Forest	8	7	7	7
Department Economic Development				
Training and Employment Agency, Enniskillen	19	21	19	18
Enniskillen Training Centre	33	32	27	23
Trading Standards Branch, Enniskillen	2	2	2	2
YTP/JTP Office, Enniskillen	9	—	—	—
Department Health and Social Services				
Enniskillen Social Security Office	101	94	94	92
Department Environment				
Castle barracks, Enniskillen[1]	38	38	37	32
Castlearchdale Country Park[1]	3	4	3	3
County buildings, Enniskillen[1]	70	66	63	26
Chanterhill road, Enniskillen[1]	10	9	9	9
Silverhill Plant Depot, Enniskillen[1]	8	5	5	5
Killyhevlin Industrial Estate, Enniskillen[1]	—	—	—	32
Environment Service, Castlearchdale Country Park	7	6	6	5
Roads Service, Castle barracks, Enniskillen	119	105	98	85
Water Executive, Clogher Sub-depot	10	8	8	8
Water Executive, Erne house, Enniskillen	72	72	67	65

[1] Figures apply to non-industrial staff in months of April.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the public service offices other than local government offices and the number of persons employed in such offices in Omagh district council in *(a)* January 1992, *(b)* January 1993, *(c)* January 1994 and *(d)* January 1995. [26416]

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

Office	*January 1992*	*January 1993*	*January 1994*	*January 1995*
Department Finance and Personnel				
Ulster Bank Chambers, High street, Omagh	15	15	13	13
County Hall, Mountjoy road, Omagh	—	—	—	1
Department Agriculture				
Watercourse Management, Gortin road, Omagh	87	86	81	77
Veterinary Research, Beltany road, Omagh	13	17	17	17
Sperrin house, Omagh	82	82	85	91
Main street, Trillick	2	2	3	3
Gortin Glen Forest	15	15	15	15
Lough Bradan Forest	8	8	8	7
Seskinore Forest	13	13	13	13
Department Economic Development				
Training and Employment Agency, Omagh	18	18	16	16
Omagh Training Centre	43	36	36	31
Community Projects Office, Omagh	10	5	—	—

Office	January 1992	January 1993	January 1994	January 1995
Northern Ireland Office				
Lisanelly Army Camp	1	2	1	2
SW Circuit Office, County Courthouse, Omagh	17	17	17	14
Department Health and Social Services				
Independent Tribunal Service, Omagh	10	14	17	18
Omagh Social Security Office	85	84	80	78
Fraud Section—Omagh Region	17	17	17	17
Child Support Agency, Area Office, Omagh	—	—	9	9
Department Environment				
Arvalee Depot, Omagh[1]	34	37	38	44
County hall, Omagh[1]	177	181	177	163
Gortrush Industrial Estate, Omagh[1]	12	11	11	10
Gortin road, Omagh[1]	31	32	27	27
Irishtown road, Omagh[1]	11	10	11	—
Laurelbank, Hospital road, Omagh[1]	10	10	10	10
High street, Omagh[1]	—	—	—	11
Roads Service, Arvalee Depot, Omagh	99	90	80	75
Water Executive, Loughmacrory, Omagh	2	2	2	2
Water Executive, Tivenny road, Newtownstewart	2	2	2	2
Water Executive, Hunters crescent, Omagh	1	1	1	1
Water Executive, Gortin road, Omagh	47	46	44	45
Water Executive, Park road, Strabane	20	20	20	20
Water Executive, Water Works road, Glenhordial	2	2	2	1
Water Executive, Bradan road, Drumquin	2	2	2	2

[1] Figures apply to non-industrial staff in months of April.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the public service offices other than local government offices and the number of persons employed in such offices in Cookstown district council in *(a)* January 1992, *(b)* January 1993, *(c)* January 1994 and *(d)* January 1995. [26415]

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

Office	January 1992	January 1993	January 1994	January 1995
Department Finance and Personnel				
57 Molesworth street, Cookstown	14	14	10	11
Department Agriculture				
Loughry College of Agriculture and Food Technology, Cookstown	135	137	134	126
Fairhill, Cookstown	4	4	5	5
Pomeroy Forest	21	21	21	20
Department Economic Development				
Training and Employment Agency, Cookstown	10	11	9	9
Department Health and Social Services				
Cookstown Social Security Office	54	51	49	47
Department Environment				
33 Molesworth street, Cookstown[1]	11	11	11	8
57 Molesworth street, Cookstown[1]	14	—	—	—
Sandholes Road, Cookstown[1]	13	10	9	14
Station yard, Union street, Cookstown[1]	2	2	2	1
James street, Cookstown[1]	—	15	15	15
Old Railway Yard, Molesworth street, Cookstown[1]	—	—	8	8
Roads Service, 33 Molesworth street, Cookstown	38	26	23	17
Water Executive, 57 Molesworth street, Cookstown	29	29	27	27

[1]Figures apply to non-industrial staff in month of April.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the public service offices other than local government offices and the number of persons employed in such offices in Dungannon district council in *(a)* January 1992, *(b)* January 1993, *(c)* January 1994 and *(d)* January 1995. [26413]

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

Office	January 1992	January 1993	January 1994	January 1995
Department Agriculture				
Crown Buildings, Dungannon	55	56	57	57
Main street, Clogher	5	4	—	—
Church street, Ballygawley	—	—	6	6
Parkanaur Forest	6	6	6	6
Mullaghfad Forest	19	19	17	15
Department Economic Development				
Training and Employment Agency, Dungannon	22	25	18	16
Northern Ireland Office				
Crown Buildings, Dungannon	1	1	1	1
Department Health and Social Services				
Dungannon Social Security Office	88	93	86	83
Department Environment				
Tullybroom road, Clogher[1]	7	6	9	8
Moygashel Depot, Dungannon[1]	14	12	19	18
Parkside Depot, Derryhubbett road, Dungannon[1]	2	2	2	2
Roads Service, Moygashel Depot, Dungannon	70	56	52	53
Water Executive, Moygashel lane, Dungannon	34	32	36	32
Environment Service, Peatlands Country Park, Dungannon	6	6	5	4

[1] Figures apply to non-industrial staff in months of April

NHS Numbers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give an undertaking that the new NHS number will be used only with respect to the provision of health-related services; and if he will make a statement. [26442]

Mr. Moss: New NHS numbers are not being issued in Northern Ireland as a suitable unique patient and client identifier already exists in the form of a community health index number. This identifier is used only for health and personal social services purposes.

National Insurance Numbers

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answers of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *697*, and of 6 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *163*, if he has approved the use of the national insurance number for personal injuries claim purposes; and if he will make a statement. [26441]

Mr. Moss: No approval has been given for the use of the national insurance number for personal injuries claim purposes.

Police National Computer

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many accesses were made to each index of the police national computer over the last year; and if he will indicate the number of access requests that involved searching more than one index. [26440]

Sir John Wheeler: The Royal Ulster Constabulary accessed the police national computer on some 65,457 occasions during 1994–95. Of these, 41,838 were vehicle related, 12,334 were name checks, and the remaining 11,285 covered inquiries in a range of other areas. It is not possible to identify which accesses involved more than one index.

Hotel and Catering Colleges

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what was the total number of students enrolled in the hotel and catering colleges in Northern Ireland for the years 1990–91 to 1994–95; [26625]

(2) how many students born in the Republic of Ireland were enrolled in the hotel and catering colleges in Northern Ireland in each year since 1990–91. [26628]

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Year	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	[1]1994–95
Total number of students	n/a	292	428	479	487
Students domiciled in the Republic of Ireland	n/a	6	130	157	182

[1] provisional.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) how many lecturers were enrolled in the hotel and catering colleges in Northern Ireland for the years 1990–91 to 1994–95; [26626]

(2) how many lecturers, born in the Republic of Ireland, were enrolled in the hotel and catering colleges in Northern Ireland for each year since 1990–91. [26627]

Mr. Ancram: The number of full-time lecturers, in October in each year were:

1990–91: 22
1991–92: 22
1992–93: 19
1993–94: 23
1994–95: 24

Information on place of birth is not available.

Fair Employment

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the firms that were allowed to tender for contracts in spite of non-compliance with the rules of enforcement as laid down in the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989.

Mr. Ancram: With one exception, all the concerns which have been prosecuted for non-compliance with the fair employment legislation subsequently fulfilled their statutory obligations. It was therefore not necessary to debar them from tendering for contracts. The remaining concern was issued with a disqualification notice on 21 October 1991 which was cancelled on 25 November 1991 following submission to the Fair Employment Commission of a properly completed monitoring return.

Vehicle Fleet Insurance

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland which insurance underwriting firm insures the vehicles of *(a)* the Police Authority and *(b)* the Fire Authority for Northern Ireland; which firms of solicitors are instructed to act for these two authorities in insurance claims involving these vehicles; how many persons are employed by each of these legal practices; whether each of these practices operates employment procedures in accordance with the requirements of the Fair Employment legislation; and how many Protestants and Catholics are employed by each of these law practices. [26785]

Sir John Wheeler: The underwriting firm for fleet insurance in respect of the Police Authority for Northern Ireland and the Fire Authority for Northern Ireland are Crowe Motor Policies at Lloyd's. A panel of solicitors who represent the underwriters are sourced through the United Kingdom in respect of the Police Authority. Information regarding the Fire Authority is not known. Employment practices and procedures are not known.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what instructions he has given to further education colleges about the number of higher national diploma students they may accept in *(a)* the current year and *(b)* future years; and what are the reasons for these instructions. [26635]

Mr. Ancram: No instructions were given to further eduction colleges about the number of HND students they may accept in the current academic year.

In line with the Government's policy to consolidate higher-level provision throughout the UK and control public expenditure on mandatory awards, the Department of Education set an overall maximum figure for higher level, full-time provision in each college for the 1995–96 academic year. Decisions have not yet been made on the number of full-time places to be permitted in subsequent years.

International Fund for Ireland

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the action of a United States congressional committee in tying aid to the International Fund for Ireland to implementation of the MacBride principles; and what representations he has made to the United States Government on the subject. [26638]

Mr. Ancram: It is for the US authorities to decide whether, and under which conditions, they wish to contribute to the International Fund for Ireland. Members of the Administration and of Congress are aware of our view that the key to eliminating employment imbalances in Northern Ireland is to support the far-reaching fair employment legislation already in place with new job-creating investment. In this context, the conference on trade and investment convened by President Clinton in Washington last month was a very considerable success.

A5

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has for upgrading the quality of the Londonderry to Dublin road. [26639]

Mr. Moss: During the next five years the Department proposes to spend approximately £6.3 million on schemes to provide major improvements of seven different locations on the Northern Ireland portion of this road—the A5 Londonderry-border route. At the same time, it is planned to undertake a joint Northern Ireland-Republic of Ireland study to determine a long-term strategy for the future improvement of the road.

Police

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he set up the committee to review Northern Ireland's policing; and what is its remit, time scale and membership. [26647]

Sir John Wheeler: The committee which will oversee the fundamental review of policing needs is an established part of the tripartite relationship for policing. It first met in October 1993, and its membership comprises officials from the Northern Ireland Office and from the Police Authority for Northern Ireland as well as officers from the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The remit of this committee in relation to the review is, on the assumption that the ceasefires continue, to build an assessment of Northern Ireland's policing needs and costs, and initial findings are expected in spring 1996.

Civil Servants

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table showing *(a)* the number of civil service posts, including positions in executive agencies but excluding technical appointments at grades 1 to 6 which have been advertised, together with the number of *(b)* applicants, *(c)* interviewees and *(d)* appointees broken down by (i) civil servants and (ii) non-civil servants for each year from 1 January 1990 to 31 December as a whole in Northern Ireland. [26944]

Sir John Wheeler: The numbers of applicants, interviewees and appointees to civil service posts at grades 3 to 6, excluding technical appointments, in the Northern Ireland Departments and the Northern Ireland Office, for each year from 1 January 1990 to 31 December 1994, are set out. No posts at grades 1 and 2 have been advertised.

	(a)	(b) Number of applicants		(c) Number of Interviewees		(d) Number of Appointees		
Year advertised	*Number of posts advertised*[2]	*Applicants Civil Servants*	*Non–Civil Servants*	*Civil Servants*	*Non–Civil Servants*	*Civil Servants*	*Non–Civil Servants*	*Appointees Total*[3]
1990	8	34	117	21	46	5	3	8
1991	7	39	115	14	39	4	3	7
1992	4	19	121	13	31	2	2	4
1993	2	4	59	2	9	1	0	1
1994	5	25	146	15	23	5	0	5
Total	26	121	558	65	148	17	8	25

Notes:
[1] The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is responsible for civil service staff in the Northern Ireland Departments and Northern Ireland Office only; consequently the figures exclude appointments to Great Britain civil service Departments with staff in Northern Ireland.
[2] The total of appointments for 1993 does not match the number of posts advertised because an anticipated vacancy was not filled.

Ambulance Personnel (Early Retirement)

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what proposals he has to introduce an early retirement scheme for ambulance personnel similar to the scheme which operates in England, Wales and Scotland; and if he will make a statement. [27136]

Mr. Moss: A premature retirement scheme exists for all groups of staff within the health and personal social services.

I do not propose to provide funding for a special scheme for ambulance personnel. Funds for such a scheme would have to come out of the resources available for services for patients and clients.

Income support

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to review the £8,000 eligibility threshold for income support. [271376]

Mr. Moss: People with capital in excess of £8,000 are not entitled to income support. The Government keep this capital limit under review, but there are no current plans for change.

Economy

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the surveys undertaken by Mr. Alan Gray in respect of the economy in Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [27170]

Mr. Ancram: I am aware of Mr. Gray's recent book, which reports the results of his surveys of multinational manufacturing companies and international tour operators. These confirm the Government's view that lasting peace can unlock enormous potential for industrial and tourism growth in Northern Ireland and, indeed, in the island of Ireland.

Dental Services

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the *(a)* number of adult courses of treatment, *(b)* total national health service gross expenditure, *(c)* total cost borne by the Exchequer and *(d)* total cost borne by patients, for the general dental service, for each year between 1990 and 1994. [27195]

Mr. Moss: The information is as follows:

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Adult Courses of Treatment	n/a	640,088	706,319	713,018	729,749
Total Gross Expenditure	£35,026,000	£44,059,000	£47,637,000	£43,905,000	£46,318,000
Total Net Expenditure	£26,295,000	£34,132,000	£36,601,000	£33,526,00	£35,087,000
Patients Contributions	£8,731,00	£9,927,000	£11,036,000	£10,379,000	£11,231,000

Health Boards (Staff)

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of staff employed in each support service in each health board by gender, full-time/part-time and religious background in each year since 1990. [26007]

Mr. Moss: The information requested has been placed in the Library.

WALES

Welsh Language Schemes

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will approve the draft guidelines on the form and content of Welsh language schemes sent to him by the Welsh Language Board, and if he will lay the draft guidelines before Parliament. [28359]

Mr. Redwood: I am today laying before Parliament copies of draft guidelines submitted to me by the board in accordance with section 10 of the Welsh Language Act 1993, and which I have approved without amendment. I am also placing in the Libraries copies of the board's detailed report to me on the consultation it undertook earlier this year on the draft guidelines. I am grateful to the board for the thoroughness and professionalism which it demonstrated in conducting the consultation and producing its report; the way is now open, subject to parliamentary consideration of the guidelines, for the board to take forward the implementation of part II of the Act. In this, I shall be looking to the board to continue to demonstrate the flexible and sensible approach which has already been evident in its work over the last 18 months.

Autism

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of services to autistic children and their families in Wales. [26735]

Mr. Richards: Health and local authorities are responsible for identifying individuals with autism and for the provision of appropriate services.

As part of a project to promote the development of services to people with autism in Wales, the National Autistic Society is carrying out an audit of autism-focused services. This project is supported by the Welsh Office, through the Welsh mental handicap strategy.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what discussions he has had with the National Farmers Union Wales about proposals to fly calves from military air bases in the United Kingdom; and what is his policy on such proposals. [26732]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Proposals for the export of live animals are essentially a matter for individual companies or organisations. All proposals will be scrutinised to ensure that welfare requirements are fully met.

Farms (Fatal Accidents)

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the number of fatal accidents on farms in Wales in each of the last 10 years. [26926]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The available information relates to deaths occurring on farms in Wales and is set out in the following table.

Deaths caused by:	*Accidents and adverse effects (ICD E800–E949)*	*Injury undetermined whether accidentally or purposely inflicted (ICD E980–E989)*
1983	4	0
1984	8	2
1985	11	4
1986	7	2
1987	10	2
1988	7	1
1989	16	1
1990	6	0
1991	5	0
1992	7	3

ICD=International classification of diseases, injuries and causes of death

Source:

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement about the deputy chairman of the Welsh Development Agency. [28438]

Mr. Redwood: Solicitors acting on behalf of Dr. Roy Bichan announced yesterday that Dr. Bichan had been informed that the Serious Fraud Office propose to charge him with offences arising from its investigation concerning Butte Mining plc, of which Dr. Bichan was non-executive chairman from September 1987 until December 1988.

Dr. Bichan told me that he intends to contest the charges vigorously, but in doing so he would find it impossible properly to carry out his responsibilities as deputy chairman of the agency, a position he has held since January 1993. I have accepted his resignation with immediate effect. None of the allegations reflects on the WDA or on the contribution which Dr. Bichan has made to the work of the agency.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 12 June 1995

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Staff Pension Payments

Mr. Denham: To ask the Lord President of the Council how many staff employed by right hon. and hon. Members and funded by the office cost allowance had payments made to personal pension providers in each year since 1989; what is the average length of membership of such personal pension schemes for *(a)* those who have now left their employment in Parliament and *(b)* those who are still employed in Westminster; and for how many of such members are (i) regular premium payments and (ii) single premium payments made by the House.

Mr. Newton: The number of payments made to personal pension providers on behalf of staff employed by right hon. and hon. Members who are funded from the office costs allowance for the past five financial years is as follows:

1990–91: 1,057
1991–92: 1,113
1992–93: 1,264
1993–94: 1,375
1994–95: 1,423

Records are not centrally held to enable answers to be given to the remaining specific questions asked.

HEALTH

NHS Trusts

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 23 November, *Official Report*, column *216*, (1) when 1993–94 data on trust surpluses and deficits will be available;

(2) if she will now publish a list of which trusts failed to *(a)* break even, *(b)* keep within the external financing limit and *(c)* record a 6 per cent. return on capital, and by what percentage and sum in 1993–94;

(3) if she will now publish a list of trust turnover for 1993–94.

Mr. Sackville *[pursuant to his reply, 9 December 1994, c. 396]:* I regret that there were errors in the table provided in my previous reply.

An amended table has been placed in the Library.

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what information she has in respect of employment packages offered by an NHS trust which include private medical insurance as an integral or an optional part; and if she will make a statement. [27402]

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally. National health service trusts have powers under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 to employ staff on whatever terms they think fit.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *594*, what information her Department holds centrally in respect of contracts for health and hospital services awarded by health authorities and NHS trusts under the competitive tendering process. [27414]

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 6 June at column *28* for information about contracts for clinical services awarded after competitive tender by national health service trust in England. Information about the award of such contracts by district health authorities is not available centrally.

Operating Theatres

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many dedicated private operating theatres there are in NHS hospital trusts; [27422]

(2) how many dedicated private operating theatres have opened in NHS hospital trusts in the past year. [27421]

Mr. Sackville: Records of dedicated private operating theatres in national health service hospital trusts are not available centrally. Operating theatres should be organised in relation to the needs of the whole hospital.

Clinical Negligence Scheme

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the members of the health authority in charge of the clinical negligence scheme for trusts, indicating their gender, occupation and any other NHS responsibility. [27094]

Mr. Malone: The regulations in respect of the special health authority to administer the clinical negligence scheme for trusts are being prepared and will be laid before Parliament for approval in the near future. An announcement of the membership of the proposed new health authority will be made in due course.

Capital Underspending

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *776*, on capital underspending, when she expects to publish the 1994–95 figures. [27906]

Mr. Sackville: Details of underspending on 1994–95 regional health authority capital cash limits are expected to be available at the end of July.

Great Yarmouth and Waveney Community Health Centre

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will make a statement on her plans for the future of the Great Yarmouth and Waveney community health council. [27551]

Mr. Malone: This is a matter for the Anglia and Oxford regional health authority. It is responsible for ensuring that its local community health councils are able to reflect the views of the communities it serves. My hon. Friend may wish to contact Sir Stuart Burgess, chairman of the regional health authority, for details.

Suspended Consultants

Ms Armstrong: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many consultants are currently suspended in the national health service by region; and for how long each consultant has been suspended. [27783]

Mr. Malone: This information is not available centrally. Decisions on employment matters, including possible suspensions, rest with the employing authority.

NHS Executive Letters

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she last updated NHS executive circular EL(93) 113. [27903]

Mr. Sackville: This executive letter is extant but will shortly be reviewed.

GP Vacancies

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *776*, what information on GP vacancies her Department holds centrally. [27907]

Mr. Malone: None. Information on general practitioner vacancies is held by the medical practices committee.

Cosmetic Surgery

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what percentage of cosmetic surgery operations that are currently carried out by NHS plastic surgeons are performed to correct previous cosmetic surgery performed in the private sector; [28174]

(2) what is the annual cost to the national health service of cosmetic treatment and surgery in the last three years. [28180]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints her Department has received related to liposuction surgery in the last year. [28178]

Mr. Sackville: Five.

Mrs Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to regulate private cosmetic surgery clinics. [28177]

Mr. Sackville: All private clinics where surgical procedures are carried out under anaesthesia are required to register with the local health authority under the Nursing Homes Act 1975. They have to satisfy requirements as to the facilities and the level and qualifications of staff. There are no plans further to regulate private cosmetic surgery clinics.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what estimate she has made of the number of people who undergo cosmetic surgery each year; and what percentage of this number takes place in the private sector. [28181]

(2)what percentage of plastic surgery performed by the NHS is for cosmetic purposes. [28175]

Mr. Sackville: Data available do not distinguish cosmetic surgery from other plastic surgery procedures.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many complaints her Department has received related to cosmetic surgery in the last two years. [28179]

Mr. Sackville: Thirty-six.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many representations she has received on the regulation of cosmetic surgery in the private sector. [28176]

Mr. Sackville: Nine written representations in the last two years.

Planned Expenditure

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the planned real change in spending on the national health service between 1995–96 and 1996–97 expressed *(a)* in percentage terms and *(b)* as an absolute sum; and if she will make a statement. [28143]

Mr. Sackville: Government spending on the national health service is planned to be £32.9 billion in 1996–97. This is an increase of 0.5 per cent. in real terms over 1995–96 plans, equivalent to some £160 million at 1995–96 prices. Plans for 1996–97 are subject to review in the public expenditure survey.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Deaths in Custody

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people aged 25 years and under have died *(a)* in prison and *(b)* in police custody in Northern Ireland in (i) 1993, (ii) 1994 and (iii) so far this year. [26376]

Sir John Wheeler: No-one aged 25 or under died in prison or the young offenders centre in Northern Ireland in either 1993 or 1995. There was one death by suicide in 1994.

No person aged 25 or under died in police custody during the period specified.

Anglo-Irish Secretariat

Mr. David Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on what basis the Anglo-Irish secretariat collectively gave oral and written evidence to J. J. Rowe QC for his report on the operation of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991. [26577]

Sir Patrick Mayhew: In the preparation of his report, J. J. Rowe QC took views from the Irish side of the Anglo-Irish secretariat given on behalf of the Irish Government.

Prior Options Study

Mr. Faber: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the result of the prior options study of the estate services directorate within the health and personal social services management executive of the Department of Health and Social Services. [28540]

Mr. Moss: Following a prior options study, I have decided to begin preparations with a view to establishing the estate services directorate as a next steps agency in October 1995. The agency will be developed with a view to further private sector involvement, and to this end the

chief executive will consider the potential for the privatisation of aspects of the agency's business, and provide me with recommendations in due course.

Codes of Practice

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he proposes to amend the police and criminal evidence codes of practice in Northern Ireland. [28541]

Sir John Wheeler: The Northern Ireland PACE codes of practice have recently undergone a thorough review. A considerable number of amendments have been proposed including a new, shorter police caution and the introduction of a new code on tape-recording of interviews to replace the guidelines presently followed by police. Revised draft codes have been prepared and I shall be issuing them for public consultation shortly.

DEFENCE

Service Accommodation

Mr. Clifton-Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the projected future use of the official service residence, Haymes Garth near Cheltenham. [27269]

Mr. Soames: The future of Haymes Garth is being assessed in the light of the recommendations made in Sir Peter Cazalet's review of representational entertainment in the armed forces. Subject to this work, it remains the intention that this property will be disposed of as soon as practicable, subject to the availability of suitable accommodation for the Air Officer Commander in Chief Personnel and Training Command.

Nimrod

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the original date when the Nimrod maritime aircraft were due to come out of service; and what is the current out-of-service date. [26998]

Mr. Freeman: The original out-of-service date of the Nimrod MR2 was 1995; the current planned out-of-service date is 2006.

Trident

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the in-service date of each of the Trident submarines. [26999]

Mr. Freeman: HMS Vanguard entered service in December 1994; HMS Victorious will enter service around the turn of the year; Vigilant in 1998; and Vengeance around the turn of the century.

Treaty of Rome

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the impact on Britain's defence industrial base from *(a)* the abolition of article 223 of the treaty of Rome and *(b)* the amendment of article 223 of the treaty of Rome. [27000]

Mr. Freeman: The Government's review of article 223 of the treaty of Rome, which I mentioned in my previous answer on 1 May, *Official Report*, column *84*, will take into account the implications of any change for the UK defence industry.

Ballistic Missile Defence System

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what consultations he has had with his *(a)* NATO counterparts and *(b)* WEU counterparts concerning the creation of a ballistic missile defence system; and if he will make a statement. [26995]

Mr. Freeman. Consultations with NATO allies have covered a range of BMD issues including risk, prospective defensive architectures, the scope for collaboration and its contribution to our non-proliferation work. There has been no recent consideration of these issues within WEU, although there was some discussion in 1994 of the issues arising from the possible proliferation of ballistic missiles.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if any decision by his Department to acquire a ballistic missile defence system will be taken with full consultation with the UK's NATO and WEU allies. [26996]

Mr. Freeman: The UK continues to participate in work with our NATO allies to assess the potential threat from theatre ballistic missiles, and to assess any requirement for systems to counter it.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is his Department's policy concerning the development of a national ballistic missile defence system; and if he will make a statement. [26997]

Mr. Freeman: We are currently assessing whether we have a national requirement for ballistic missile defence, and this task will be informed by the outcome from a contract awarded last October to a consortium led by British Aerospace to provide advice on options, capabilities, time scales, costs and technical risk.

Sonar 2054

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what technical problems have been experienced on the Sonar 2054 system for use in the Vanguard class strategic submarines ballistic nuclear; and if he will make a statement. [27558]

Mr. Freeman: The problems experienced with sonar 2054 and its associated towed array handling system relate to the inboard reeling system and operability issues. They do not affect the sonar's ability to support operational patrols. A programme of work to address these outstanding issues is in hand.

Portland Naval Base

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on progress towards the sale of Portland naval base. [27822]

Mr. Soames: Portland Port Ltd. was selected to purchase the naval base on 6 April. Legal and other formalities are progressing. We expect to complete the sale when the naval base closes in March next year.

Ethnic Origins

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are the latest available figures, on the ethnic origin of those serving as officers in *(a)* the Army, *(b)* the Navy and *(c)* the Royal Air Force; and if he will make a statement. [27824]

Mr. Soames: The latest available information on the ethnic origin of officers in the armed forces is contained in the tri-service personnel statistical return entitled "Ethnic Composition of the Regular Armed Forces", a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it possible for those who volunteered to participate in experiments at the Chemical and Biological Defence Establishment at Porton Down to have access to their medical records; and if he will make a statement. [27825]

Mr. Soames: Service medical records are the property of the Department but, in common with civilian medical records, individual access to them by the patient concerned is allowed in accordance with the Access to Health Records Act 1990. Under the provisions of this Act, medical records are normally released to the individual concerned only if they were compiled after 1 November 1991. However, for service medical records of former personnel compiled before this date, it has long been my Department's policy to release them on request to the individual's general practitioner when they are required for the management of a particular case. It has also been standard practice for many years to include with the volunteer's service medical record an enclosure indicating the results of medical examinations carried out during their attendance at Porton Down.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on what dates he or other Ministers or former Ministers in his Department received extracts for comment from Sir Richard Scott's draft report; on what date comments were submitted to Sir Richard; and what requests have been made for an extension of the period within which comments should have been made. [27557]

Mr. Freeman: The Government do not disclose details of correspondence between the inquiry and individual witnesses. In the case of draft extracts in particular, the inquiry has asked that these be treated in the strictest confidence and we intend to respect this.

Empty Service Dwellings

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what representations he has received in the past 12 months from hon. Members regarding empty dwellings owned by his Department in Weymouth. [27789]

Mr. Soames: My Department has received three representations in the past 12 months from hon. Members about empty dwellings owned by it in the Weymouth area.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many dwellings owned by his Department have been empty for over six months. [27793]

Mr. Soames: The information is not held centrally in the form requested and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

RAF Turnhouse

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the future of RAF Turnhouse. [27595]

Mr. Soames: I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 3 November last year to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Dr. Reid), *Official Report*, column *1238*.

Kinterbury

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what cargo was carried by the ship Kinterbury from Portsmouth to Coulport, arriving at Coulport on the morning of Wednesday 7 June. [28024]

Mr. Soames: As a matter of long-standing policy it is our practice not to comment on the details of particular operations.

Nuclear Warhead Transportation

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence on how many occasions nuclear warheads have been transported to Coulport by sea. [28025]

Mr. Soames: It is not our policy to provide details of the movement of nuclear weapons.

Defence Costs Study

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, if he will place in the Library a copy of the defence costs study into *(a)* catering and messes, *(b)* animals and vets, *(c)* travel and subsistence and *(d)* uniforms. [28023]

Mr. Soames: The reports prepared by the defence costs study teams are internal working documents. It is not our practice to publish such documents.

Consultants

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the level of expenditure on consultancy by *(a)* his Ministry *(b)* by agencies for which his Ministry is responsible for (i) 1993–94 and (ii) 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25554]

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* Individual budget holders in my Department have delegated powers to employ consultants as they see fit within the limit of their resources and consistent with all requirements for propriety and value for money. There are no centrally held records of the value of consultancy contracts let by the Department itself and such a record could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Total expenditure by agencies of the Ministry of Defence, as opposed to the Department directly, on consultants was £9.5 million in 1993–94 and £21.1 million in 1994–95. The projected figure for 1995–96 is around £23 million.

SCOTLAND

Nursing Homes

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland aged over 64 years living in *(a)* private residential homes, *(b)* private nursing homes, *(c)* local authority residential homes and *(d)* national health service nursing homes have a spouse living elsewhere. [25974]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The only information available centrally was obtained by the April 1991 census of population and is shown in the table.

Type of Communal establishment	Number of married residents aged 65 and over other than staff
(i) Residential Homes (not managed by the National Health Service, a local authority, or a housing association) including private and voluntary homes registered with the local authority or exempt from registration	540
(ii) Nursing Homes (not managed by the National Health Service, a local authority, a housing association)	1,014
(iii) Local Authority Homes	509
(iv) National Health Service Hospitals/Homes (all types)	2,369

It should be noted that residents are defined as those reporting the establishment as their usual residence. The numbers of married residents would include any persons married to another person in the same establishment.

Kintore Bypass

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on what date he expects to make an announcement on the line of route and the starting date for work on the proposed A96 Kintore bypass. [27948]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The public local inquiry into the A96 Kintore bypass raised issues which required to be considered before a formal decision could be announced. The essential consultations have now been undertaken and thus the decision can be made soon. Programming will of course depend on that decision and, if favourable, on the satisfactory subsequent completion of statutory procedures and the availability of finance.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many representations he has received from *(a)* organisations and *(b)* individuals on the proposed A96 Kintore bypass. [27949]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Forty nine formal objections were received to the draft orders and compulsory purchase order for the Kintore bypass, of which 28 were resolved by the adjustment and republication of the draft orders and by negotiations held thereafter. The remaining 21, which include one from a public body, were considered at a public local inquiry.

Infertility Treatment

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each health board area *(a)* the annual funding for infertility treatment, *(b)* the number of patients receiving infertility treatment and *(c)* the number of patients waiting to receive infertility treatment. [27368]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* It is for individual health boards to decide on the level of infertility services to purchase. Information on the number of patients receiving or waiting on infertility treatment is not available centrally.

NHS (Private Sector Involvement)

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to his answer of 12 March, *Official Report*, column *702*, if he will make a statement on the nature of the NHS projects which are being considered for the involvement of the private sector. [23405]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 9 May 1995]:* All current proposals for capital projects in the NHS in Scotland have been considered, as opportunities under the private finance initiative. The NHS trusts managing the schemes in progress to build new hospital facilities in Edinburgh and Lanarkshire are seeking private sector partners to design, build and finance the new facilities and also to operate a range of non-clinical services within the new hospitals.

Regional Selective Assistance

Mr. Donohoe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of grants of regional selective assistance made to Scottish companies and the number of companies involved for each financial year since 1979–80. [25346]

Mr. Kynoch *[holding answer 23 May 1995]:* The available information relates to payments to companies with projects to Scotland. For earlier years, this is published in the Scottish economic bulletin, copies of which are available in the Library. Expenditure in 1994–95 amounted to £77.1 million.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

MINIS

Mr. Patrick Thompson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to publish his Department's annual MINIS return. [28342]

Mr. Heseltine: The MINIS 95 returns for the Department, which this year include the Department's efficiency plan, were published on 12 June 1995. A set has been placed in the Library of the House.

Copyright Directive

Sir Tom Arnold: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to implement in United Kingdom law the directive on the term of protection of copyright and certain related rights, 93/98/EEC, by 1 July. [27862]

Mr. Ian Taylor: A draft of implementing legislation has been circulated to interested parties for comment. The consultation period ends on 26 June. This means that we will not be able to bring the legislation into force by 1 July as we had intended, but our aim is to submit the legislation to Parliament as soon as possible after the end of the consultation period.

We shall be liaising with interested parties.

Gas Licences

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *66*, if he will identify the areas covered in the draft material sent on 27 January and the reasons for sending this material to Amerada Hess Gas Ltd. and no other company. [28087]

Mr. Eggar: The draft licence material covered technical matters relating to gas shippers. It did not relate to gas suppliers or consumer issues. The material was sent to Amerada Hess Gas Ltd. because the company was judged to have the appropriate expertise to assist DTI at that stage.

Official Receivers

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if official receivers will be required to enter into contracts with private sector providers; if they will be personally liable as part of these contacts; and if they will be formally indemnified against the liability to the provider and for the acts or omissions of the provider. [27683]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Official receivers will be the contracting parties to any contract for the discharge of their functions. As such they would be liable under the terms of such contracts and, pursuant to the provisions of section 72 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994, for the proper discharge of those functions. Officials receivers will therefore need to be satisfied that any such liabilities are adequately provided for.

Insolvency Service

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the local office information system computer project will be available for the private sector contractors in the Insolvency Service to use. [27682]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Yes.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what procedures will be put in place to guarantee a high quality level of service from the contracted out operations of the Insolvency Service. [27681]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The final specification and contract will clearly state the standards of service expected from contractors. Contract monitoring by official receivers offices will ensure these standards are met and maintained.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to provide training to Insolvency Service employees unused to contract management. [27685]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Planning to provide training to the Insolvency Service employees in aspects of contract management is currently under way. All staff likely to be involved in contract management will receive relevant training prior to the contracting out.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will consult Parliament before contracting out further services of the Insolvency Service, other than those that are already planned to be contracted out. [27677]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: There is no intention to contract out any additional functions of the official receiver other than those currently being considered.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what procedures will exist to ensure that the private sector will *(a)* operate impartially and *(b)* respect confidentiality, when Insolvency Service operations are contracted out to the private sector. [27679]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The final specification and contract will clearly state the standards of performance, including impartiality and confidentiality, expected from contractors. Contract monitoring by official receivers' offices will ensure these standards are met and maintained.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how much it will cost annually to monitor the contracts of providers in the Insolvency Service. [27686]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: It is still too early in the process to determine any costs of contracting out. The cost of monitoring any contracts entered into with private sector providers will be dependent on the total number of contracts let.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals he has to ensure that an Insolvency Service investigation will not be prejudiced by part of the investigation being dealt with in the private sector and the other part being handled in the public sector. [27678]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The separation of the preliminary investigation and any further investigation currently works effectively in many official receivers' offices by increasing the efficiency of dealing with targeted cases in need of further investigation. Contract management and monitoring of private sector providers by official receivers' offices will ensure that contracting out will not have any detrimental effect on the investigation procedure.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to ensure that those people who will carry out the duties of the contracted-out services of the Insolvency Service will be obliged to hold the same qualifications as are required now of Insolvency Service employees. [27676]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The requirement scoping document which will be made available to selected potential bidders will set out levels of experience and competencies of staff that will be required by private sector providers. Any contractor must satisfy these requirements.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what response he has made to the suggestion of the official receivers that insolvency practitioners could be appointed either as a liquidator or trustee, with the payment of fees guaranteed. [27688]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: This option was considered by Stoy Hayward whose report concluded that it would expose far less of the official receivers' work to competition from the private sector and, if insolvencies were once again to rise, would not prevent the official receivers' specialist investigative resources from being increasingly consumed in the initial stages of casework.

Contracting Out

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he plans to publish the detailed specification of the contracting-out process. [27687]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The draft specification will be made available to selected potential bidders on 15 June 1995.

Private Insolvency Practitioners

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of the National Audit Office's report in respect of the levels of rejection of private sector insolvency practitioners' reports. [27680]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: There is a significant proportion of cases where elements of unfit conduct have been identified by insolvency practitioners as well as by official receivers, but in relation to which, taking into account all the aspects of the insolvency, it is not in the public interest to institute proceedings under section 6 of the Company

Directors Disqualification Act 1986. There has been a discernible improvement in reporting by insolvency practitioners both in respect of completeness and timeliness and as a result of which the percentage not providing a basis for consideration of proceedings has fallen from 81 per cent. reported by the National Audit Office in October 1993 to 69 per cent. in 1994–95.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Arts Funding

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage (1) what assistance his Department is giving towards the restoration of the Grand theatre in Doncaster; and if he will make a statement; [27389]

(2) what assistance his Department is giving for the conversion of the Square chapel at Halifax west Yorkshire to a recital room; and if he will make a statement; [27398]

(3) what assistance his Department is giving to the creation of a theatre in the Odeon cinema at Scarborough; and if he will make a statement; [27399]

Mr. Dorrell: English Heritage has contributed £342,228 towards the cost of eligible repairs to the Square chapel, Halifax. The Arts Council announced last month an award of £1.4 million from the national lottery to the Stephen Joseph theatre, which is developing the Odeon cinema, Scarborough. I understand that plans for the development of the Grand theatre, Doncaster, are still at an early stage.

Both the Square chapel and the Stephen Joseph theatre receive funding for their artistic programmes from the Yorkshire and Humberside arts board.

Channel 4

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will estimate the expected deficit or surplus of Channel 4 in the years 1990 to 2000. [26444]

Mr. Dorrell: Forward financial planning is a matter for the Channel 4 television corporation. Figures for the period 1990–94 are contained within the annual reports published by the Independent Television Commission, for 1990–1992, and Channel 4, for 1993–1994. The figures are:

Date	*£ million*
April–December 1990	1.1 surplus
January–December 1991	0.2 surplus
January–December 1992	6.6 deficit

From January 1993, when Channel 4 became a self-governing statutory corporation, its retained profit figures, after taxation and payments of excess qualifying revenue to the Independent Television Commission, were:

Date	*£ million*
January–December 1993	1.3 retained profit
January–December 1994	21.9 retained profit

UNIDROIT Convention

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what action he is taking in respect of the draft UNIDROIT convention on the international return of stolen or illegally exported cultural objects; who will be attending from the United Kingdom the June conference to be held in Rome on this subject; what support his Department is giving; and if he will make a statement. [27396]

Mr. Dorrell: The UK will be represented at the conference in Rome by officials from the Department of National Heritage and the Treasury Solicitor's Department. There is still work to be done on the draft UNIDROIT convention. However, the objectives behind the draft are laudable; and we will continue to work constructively with other countries participating in the discussions, to achieve a convention that could be a mutually acceptable compromise to as many states, both importing and exporting, as possible.

National Lottery

Mr Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will ensure that the odds of winning the national lottery are printed on the lottery ticket. [27794]

Mr. Dorrell: This is an operational matter for Camelot Group plc. I have therefore asked the Director General of the National Lottery, who is responsible for regulating the operation of the lottery, to write to the hon. Member, placing copies of his response in the Libraries of the House.

PRIME MINISTER

Competitiveness

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Prime Minister whether the proposals put forward by the President of the Board of Trade of intervention by Her Majesty's Government to improve the non-price competitiveness of British industry at home and overseas are intended to restore the balance between price and non-price competitiveness; and if he will publish his assessment of the likely cost of such intervention on *(a)* output and *(b)* employment in (i) 1996 and (ii) 1997. [27494]

The Prime Minister: The measures brought forward in the Government's recent White Paper on competitiveness are designed to improve the overall competitiveness of United Kingdom business and so help raise output and employment.

Bosnia

Mr. Gapes: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his speech on 31 May, *Official Report*, column 1001, how many Ukrainian United Nations peacekeeping soldiers were taken hostage by the Bosnian Government forces on 28 May; how long they were held; when and where they were released; what sanctions or threats were made against the Bosnian Government to secure their release; and on how many other occasions since 1992 UN forces have been taken hostage by the Bosnian Government side. [28112]

The Prime Minister: We understand that six Ukrainian UN personnel were detained by Bosnian Government forces in Gorazde on 28 may. They were released later the same day and returned to their camp. We are not aware of any other occasion when the Bosnian Government took UN peacekeepers hostage.

We condemn unreservedly all acts of hostage taking by all parties. The Serbs must release the hostages that they hold immediately and unconditionally co-operate with the UN in carrying out its mandate.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister on what dates he received extracts for comment from Sir Richard Scott's draft report; on what date comments were submitted to Sir Richard; and what requests have been made by his Department for an extension of the period within which comments should have been made. [27554]

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister which Ministers have received a draft, or draft extract, of Lord Justice Scott's inquiry report into the sale of arms to Iraq affair. [27590]

The Prime Minister: The Government do not disclose details of correspondence between the inquiry and individual witnesses. In the case of draft extracts in particular, the inquiry has asked that these be treated in the strictest confidence.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the criteria for determining whether the legal costs arising from the Scott inquiry of *(a)* Ministers, *(b)* ex-Ministers and *(c)* senior civil servants, should be covered by the Government; and if he will list all possible costs incurred or committed; and if he will make a statement. [28139]

The Prime Minister: Legal advice is available to witnesses to Sir Richard Scott's inquiry in each of the three categories listed where it is requested by the individual concerned and where their departmental legal adviser or the Treasury solicitor's department agrees that the request for the provision of such advice is reasonable. The total cost to public funds of providing legal services to witnesses to date is approximately £568,000. This figure includes the costs of legal services provided by the Treasury solicitor's department and by external lawyers. Some legal advice has also been provided by departmental lawyers as part of their normal duties. The cost of this advice is not quantifiable.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Prime Minister (1) which civil servants, Government advisers or ministerial advisers, past or present, have sought legal advice from solicitors or barristers in respect of draft conclusions reached by the Scott inquiry; what is the estimated cost of such legal expenses to public funds; and if he will make a statement; [27882]

(2) which Ministers, past or present, have sought legal advice from solicitors or barristers in respect of draft conclusions reached by the Scott inquiry; what is the estimate cost of such legal expenses to public funds; and if he will make a statement. [27781]

The Prime Minister *[holding answers 9 June 1995]:* Details of the costs of legal advice to witnesses to the Scott inquiry are not held centrally nor is the cost of advice in respect of draft conclusions identified separately from the cost of other advice. This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost. It would not right to identify the nature of the advice given to particular individuals. This is a matter of confidence between them and their legal advisers.

Mr. Madden: To ask the Prime Minister if he intends to establish an inquiry into the leak to the BBC of a provisional draft of the report by Mr. Justice Scott. [27894]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* Extracts of the draft report were sent by Sir Richard Scott to a number of people, some of whom are outside Government. Inquiries have been undertaken to establish whether there is any prima facie evidence that there has been an unauthorised disclosure of the information concerned from within Government. On the basis of these inquiries, there is no reason to suppose that the leak came from within Government.

Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy to include the future of British fishing stocks in the agenda for the intergovernmental conference in 1996; and if he will make a statement. [27244]

The Prime Minister: Intergovernmental conferences deal with treaty change rather than adjustment of the content of individual policies. We will of course continue to work for improvements in the operation of the appropriate fora.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what information he has received from his Russian and United States counterparts on the progress made by the Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission on the Iranian nuclear programme and nuclear exports to Iran. [27649]

Mr. David Davis: The Gore-Chernomyrdin Commission has not met since the US-Russian summit in May, but is due to do so before the end of June. Progress has already been made on the question of nuclear exports to Iran with President Yeltsin's commitment at the Moscow summit not to transfer gas centrifuge equipment to the Iranians.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what response Her Majesty's Government have made to the call by Colonel Gaddafi of Libya on 16 May that the Arab states should collaborate on the production of nuclear weapons. [27653]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None. Libya, like most other Arab states, is a member of the non-proliferation treaty and we expect her to comply fully with her obligations not to acquire nuclear weapons.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy in respect of the letter, dated 9 May, from the permanent representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the president of the non-proliferation treaty review and extension conference, NPT/Conf. 1995/30, claiming a special status for North Korea within the non-proliferation treaty; and if the United Kingdom within the non-proliferation treaty; and if the United Kingdom has discussed the implications of the letter with the other two depositary states for the treaty. [27655]

Mr. David Davis: We have not discussed the North Korean letter with the other depositary states: we expect all states parties to the non-proliferation treaty to comply fully with their obligations. We have welcomed the framework agreement between the US and DPRK and we hope this will lead to a resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the proposals by Japan to create a nuclear co-operation organisation for states in Asia along the lines of the European Union's Euratom agency. [27654]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We know of no Japanese Government proposals for a nuclear co-operation organisation in Asia on the lines of Euratom. However, there is considerable discussion at a non-government level on increasing nuclear co-operation in the east Asian and south-east Asian area, with particular emphasis on co-operation in the area of research, safety and operating standards. We welcome any moves by Japanese industry or Government to ensure that nuclear energy development in east Asia take place in a sound, safe and secure manner.

Social Development

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the international commitments entered into by Her Majesty's Government through the signing by a Foreign Office Minister of the declaration agreed by participating states at the United Nations world summit for social development in Copenhagen in March. [27805]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The declaration and programme of action of the world summit for social development were adopted by the consensus. No legal commitment was entered into. The advance unedited texts of the declaration and programme of action have been placed in the Library of the House. When the final text issues from the United Nations they will be placed in the Library.

Chernobyl

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the agreement between the European Union and the Ukraine on the financing of the closedown of the Chernobyl reactors. [27887]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: At the EU and G7 summits in 1994, substantial sums were committed to an action plan for Ukraine's energy sector, including the closure of Chernobyl. Following a visit to Ukraine in April by a senior delegation from the EU and the G7, President Kuchma undertook to close the remaining Chernobyl reactors by 2000, which we warmly welcome. Discussions are continuing with the Ukrainians to draw up a final plan on closure. The EU, the G7 and international financial institutions will continue to work closely with Ukraine to achieve this aim as well as the wider objectives of the action plan.

World Service

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about the current arrangements for broadcasts by the World Service to Iran and Iraq. [27459]

Mr. Baldry: The World Service broadcasts to Iran in Persian for 22 hours a week. The emphasis is on news and current affairs, but programmes covering the arts, science, economics, medicine, culture and entertainment also form part of the output.

The Arabic service is on the air for 12 hours and 15 minutes every day. All broadcasts are beamed to Iraq. As the World Service's biggest foreign language service, it broadcasts a wide range of programmes, with news and current affairs as the backbone.

English language broadcasts are beamed to Iran for 18 hours a day and to Iraq for twenty-one and a half hours a day. English teaching programmes are also broadcast, either as part of the Persian and Arabic services, or as separate transmissions.

World Service output reaches Iran and Iraq mainly through shortwave transmissions from relay stations at Masirah in Oman, Cyprus and from the UK. Some medium-wave transmissions from Masirah also reach the area. Arabic service transmissions have been jammed within Iraq in the past, but no jamming is taking place at present.

Caribbean

Sir Thomas Arnold: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current expenditure incurred by Her Majesty's Government in the dependent territories in the Caribbean. [27982]

Mr. Baldry: The total expenditure by Her Majesty's Government on the five Caribbean dependent territories for the financial year 1994–95 is estimated to be £20.5 million.

Eastern Europe

Ms Quin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the value of British investment for each of the last five years into *(a)* Hungary, *(b)* Poland, *(c)* the Czech Republic, *(d)* Slovakia, *(e)* Romania and *(f)* Bulgaria and also publish corresponding figures for German, French, Italian and Dutch investment into those countries. [26742]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The value of British direct investment for the five years 1989 to 1993, the latest available, is as follows:

Stock of UK direct investment (book value, £ million)

	1989	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Poland	0	4	6	16	18
Hungary	0	0	26	84	68
Czech Republic / Slovak Republic	0	0	1	13	8
Romania	0	0	0	2	11
Bulgaria	0	0	1	6	7

Source: Central Statistical Office

The value of other countries' investment into the region is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Turkey

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will urge the Government of Turkey to allow the Armenian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox churches in Turkey to re-open their theological seminaries. [26883]

Mr. David Davis: Decisions on the operations of the specific religious or educational institutions are a matter for the Turkish authorities. We have raised with the Turkish Government our concerns on the rights of religious and other minorities in Turkey including on the position of the Armenian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox churches.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what dates he or other Ministers or former Ministers in his Department received extracts for comment from Sir Richard Scott's draft report; on what date comments were submitted to Sir Richard; and what requests have been made for an extension of the period within which comments should have been made. [27591]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The Government do not disclose details of correspondence between the inquiry and individual witnesses. In the case of draft extracts in particular, the inquiry has asked that these be treated in the strictest confidence.

Entry Clearance

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if a young person is unable to remain within the United Kingdom without the requisite entry clearance whilst adoption formalities are being pursued. [27694]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I have been asked to reply.

A child coming to the United Kingdom for adoption would on arrival normally be expected to be in possession of an entry clearance issued for the purpose. If my hon. Friend has in mind a particular case where an entry clearance has not been issued, I should be happy to advise him further.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Dumping at Sea

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether Her Majesty's Government are required to provide information to *(a)* the European Commission, *(b)* the London dumping convention and *(c)* the Oslo convention the past disposal at sea in the north Atlantic and Irish sea by the United Kingdom of surplus chemical weapon munitions, redundant explosives or other military origin toxic materials. [26701]

Mr. Jack: There are no requirements to report any information on disposal at sea to the European Commission. The reporting requirements of the London and Oslo conventions do not extend to military wastes which are covered by sovereign immunity. However, the UK no longer disposes of such wastes at sea.

Dogs

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many dogs were exported from the United Kingdom to non-EU countries in the last three years; and what was their country of origin. [27107]

Mrs. Browning: The information requested is not centrally available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Sewage Sludge

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what research is being undertaken on the application of sludge to farm land. [26940]

Mr. Jack: My Department is spending about £0.7 million in 1995–96 on six research projects concerning sewage sludge applications to farm land. The project titles, contractors and estimated costs for 1995–96 are as follows:

Effects of sewage sludge on agricultural productivity and soil fertility.

This project is funded Jointly with the Department of the Environment, the Welsh Office and the United Kingdom Water Industry Research Limited. The Scottish Office is funding complementary work in relation to this project.

Contractor: ADAS, IACR Rothamsted and WRc

1995–96 costs: £393,000 (MAFF contribution £94,000).

Accumulation of Potentially Toxic Elements by livestock grazing sludge grassland.

Contractor: Chalcombe Agricultural Resource.

1995–96 costs: £169.000.

Assessment of the availability of heavy metals and their effects on soil microbiology.

Contractor: IACR Rothamsted

1995–96 costs: £145.000.

The vulnerability of soils to pollution by heavy metals.

Contractor: Reading University

1995–96 costs £98,000.

Effects of heavy metals from sewage sludge on the growth and yield of legumes.

Contractor: ADAS

1995–96 costs: £97,000.

Effects of inorganic metal salt additions to agricultural soils on soil microbial activity and long-term fertility.

Contractor: ADAS

1995–96 costs: £28,000.

In addition, the Scottish Office is spending £0.6 million in 1995–96 on research at the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and the Scottish agricultural college and the Department of the Environment has an on-going £0.25 million per year research programme on sewage sludge utilisation.

Pesticides

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list those nations which are members of the European Economic Community which impose more stringent regulations than those adopted by the United Kingdom on the application of pesticides or herbicides in agriculture and horticulture, in each case specifying the prohibitions or standards they apply additional to those of (i) the European Community and (ii) the United Kingdom. [27314]

Mrs Browning: The UK's regulatory system for pesticides, including herbicides, has the objective of protecting people and the environment while ensuring that pesticides are available to those who really need them. As the harmonised Community regime comes into effect, all member states will increasingly work to the same rules. Differences in decisions taken will then be attributable solely to differences in characteristics such as climate and farming practice.

Fish Quotas

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his ministerial counterpart in the Republic of Ireland about a permanent agreement on fish quota swaps; and if he will make a statement. [27151]

Mr. Jack: I have had no discussions with my opposite number in the Republic of Ireland about a permanent agreement on fish quota swaps. A permanent agreement would risk undermining the principle of relative stability. Agreement on fish quota swaps is reached, however, on a year-by-year basis in the light of prevailing fishing opportunities.

Rural White Paper

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the organisations and individuals who have produced consultative documents to the proposed rural White Paper. [27224]

Mrs. Browning: My right hon. Friends the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretary of State for the Environment have received written representations from 328 organisations and 53 individuals. A list of the organisations which had submitted representations by 20 February was deposited in the Library of the House on 22 February. I am today placing in the Library of the House an updated list of all organisations and individuals who have made written submissions. Copies of these submissions, except where confidentiality has been requested, are available for inspection in the Ministry's main departmental library.

Genetically Modified Organisms

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list all products on sale in the United Kingdom controlled under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 1992. [27203]

Sir Paul Beresford: I have been asked to reply.

The Secretary of State for the Environment has not issued any consents under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 1992 for products consisting of or containing genetically modified organisms for placing on the market in Great Britain. The information relating to Northern Ireland is a matter for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 1992 together implement Council directive 90/220/EEC on the deliberate release into the environment of genetically modified organisms. In accordance with this directive, the products which have been approved for sale in the European Community are a vaccine to control Aujeszky's disease in pigs, a vaccine to control rabies in foxes and seeds of herbicide-tolerant tobacco.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Science and Technology

31. **Mrs. Angela Knight:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what progress has been made in the past six months in implementing the proposals in the science and technology White Paper. [26063]

Mr. David Hunt: Excellent progress has been made, particularly in building improved partnerships between government and industry to enhance our research and development record.

32. **Mr. Bayley:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster if he will make a statement about the technology foresight programme. [26064]

Mr. Horam: The foresight programme is a resounding success. The Government are grateful for the voluntary efforts of Foresight panels. We need to follow up vigorously on foresight priorities.

Civil Service

35. **Mr. Hawkins:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to introduce and develop a code of conduct for civil servants. [26067]

Mr. David Hunt: I intend to introduce the civil service code after due consultation and consideration.

Sir Irvine Patnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to ensure that the civil service continues to be seen to be above party politics. [26066]

Mr. David Hunt: The Government will introduce a new civil service code summarising the values, including political impartiality, which civil servants are expected to hold.

Internet

36. **Mr. Whittingdale:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to encourage more Government Departments to make more information available on Internet. [26068]

Mr. Horam: Staff at CCTA, the Government Centre for Information Systems, are working with Departments to increase the breadth and depth of information available over the Internet. Already, more than 40 Departments and agencies have information accessible via the CCTA Government Information Service, and there are, on average, more than 80,000 requests for information each week.

Civil Service College

37. **Mr. Duncan Smith:** To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what opportunities he has identified for the Civil Service College to co-operate with similar institutions overseas. [26069]

Mr. Horam: I mention the Civil Service College's services to overseas ministers and officials whenever appropriate. The college also makes direct contact and is co-operating with a number of similar institutions overseas.

Charter Mark

Mr. Spring: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what plans he has to increase public awareness of the charter mark scheme. [26062]

Mr. Horam: Charter mark is going from strength to strength. Over 3,000 members of the public have been involved in this year's scheme by nominating

organisations they think deserve an award. We are delighted with this response and will give people the opportunity to nominate services again next year.

Access to Information

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what new action he is taking to increase public access to information. [26057]

Mr. David Hunt: We are implementing the proposals contained in the White Paper on open government.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *56*, on concessional loans agreements with Indonesia, what projects have been identified for funding under the concessional loan agreements which were signed in April 1993 and April 1994; and what progress has been made towards concluding agreements with the Government of Indonesia in respect of each of those projects. [28182]

Mr. Baldry: The current position on projects funded from the concessional loan arrangements signed in 1993 and 1994 is as follows:

PROJECTS IDENTIFIED FOR FUNDING UNDER CONCESSIONAL LOAN ARRANGEMENT 1993

Samarinda combined cycle power plant

The agreement for the power station was concluded in March 1995 and for the transmission line in May 1995.

Piston engines research laboratory

The soft loan arrangement is being finalised and an agreement with the Government of Indonesia is expected within the next few weeks.

PROJECTS IDENTIFIED FOR FUNDING UNDER CONCESSIONAL LOAN ARRANGEMENT 1994

Cikampek to Cirebon railway Double Tracking

An offer of aid was made to the Government of Indonesia on 23 May 1995 and their reply is awaited.

Science and Technology Equipment for Java Universities

Contract negotiations are in progress between the UK supplier and the Indonesians

Navigational Aids

The results of the appraisal were presented to the Government of Indonesia in April 1995. Their comments are awaited.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *58*, if he will list the locations in Indonesia, at sea and on land, at which the lighthouses, light-beacons and lightbouys supplied under the navigational aids project have been installed. [28184]

Mr. Baldry: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his letter of 31 May relating to his answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Mullin) of 6 December 1994, *Official Report*, columns *118–20*, if *(a)* full and *(b)* formal appraisals were carried out in respect of each of the aid projects cited; and by whom each was undertaken. [28192]

Mr. Baldry: Appropriate appraisals were carried out in all cases. Details of these appraisals are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Ms Emma Humphreys

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to refer back to the Court of Appeal the case of Emma Humphreys who was convicted in 1986 of murder; at what Her Majesty's prison she is currently being held; and if he will make a statement. [27415]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Ms Humphreys has been granted leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal. I understand that the case has been listed for hearing on 29 June. She is currently held at Holloway prison.

Asylum Seekers

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measurable benefit has been achieved by the operation of the fast-track appeals procedure for safe third country asylum cases since July 1993; at what financial cost; and if he will make a statement. [27704]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Information from the first quarter of 1995 indicates that the period between receipt of the appeal and promulgation of the determination for without foundation appeals—which include fast-track appeals—was on average about a third of that for substantive appeals. Costs cannot be attributed separately for fast-track appeals.

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many asylum seekers have been removed to Belgium on safe third country grounds since 26 July 1993; and how many of those so removed have been returned to the United kingdom by the Belgian authorities. [27705]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: One hundred people who had been refused asylum in the United Kingdom on safe third country grounds have been removed to Belgium since 26 July 1993. Of these, eight have been returned to the United Kingdom.

ENVIRONMENT

Hampstead Heath

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the level of capital expenditure on Hampstead heath *(a)* between 1981–82 and 1985–86 and *(b)* when it was under the control of the London residuary body; and what has been the level of capital expenditure since it became the responsibility of the City of London. [27320]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: This information is not collected by the Department.

Air Pollution

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue bulletins to the public on air quality when the threshold of 50 parts per billion of ozone is exceeded over an eight-hour period; and if he will make a statement. [27393]

Mr. Atkins: Up-to-date information on ozone levels is available to the public at all times on the Government's freephone 0800 556677, on Cefax page 404, and on Teletext page 106. Reports and forecasts are sent twice daily to broadcast and print media.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research he has commissioned into the economic impact of air pollution on agriculture, forestry and materials. [27852]

Mr. Atkins: The UK devotes of the order of £1.5 million to the determination of critical loads—maximum pollutant loading before the onset of damage—for various terrestrial ecosystems such as crops, vegetation and forests. Work has already been commissioned on the effects of acidifying pollutants on forests, soils and natural vegetation. The mapping of critical loads, and exceedances of them, across the UK allows the extent of environmental damage to be assessed, and the national materials exposure programme, which has been running continuously for the last eight years, has allowed determination of the rate of deterioration of various materials exposed to acidifying air pollutants. In addition, ozone damage to crop has been quantified as part of a programme of UK-led experiments within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's convention on the long-range transport of air pollutants. A new three-year research programme has also been commissioned in order to quantify the current and future effects and costs of damage to materials caused by ground-level ozone.

Ms Ruddock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he has received on the potential economic costs of damage to materials in the UK from tropospheric ozone. [27851]

Mr. Atkins: In 1994, my Department commissioned a report to assess the potential economic costs of damage to materials by ozone. This scaled US estimates from the late 1960s, and provided a range of costs for the UK of £170 million—£345 million in current terms for damage to all stock at risk and antiozonant protection. I am pleased to announce that, following this report, I have commissioned a three-year research programme which will quantify the current and potential future extent and costs of damage to materials from atmospheric ozone.

Hedgerows

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what action his Department is going to take in respect of the hedgerow removal at *(a)* Stamford bridge, grid reference SE 663529, *(b)* Kilburn, north Yorkshire, grid reference SE 507805 and *(c)* Balne crossroads, grid reference SE 567197; what assessment he has made of whether the removal of these hedgerows is in contradiction of his countryside stewardship scheme and other initiatives; and if he will make a statement. [27397]

Mr. Atkins: I will write to the hon. Member.

Repossessions

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the number of repossessions which occurred *(a)* in Hornsey and Wood Green *(b)* Haringey, *(c)* Greater London and *(d)* England and Wales in each of the last 10 years. [27661]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The information requested is not available centrally.

Berkshire

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will identify the geographical characteristics of Berkshire which justify its division into six unitary authorities. [27853]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Geography is among the factors considered in the Local Government Commission's final report for Berkshire which recommended a structure of five unitary authorities, based on existing districts but including a merger of Bracknell Forest and Windsor and Maidenhead. My right hon. Friend accepted the commission's reasons and recommendations for an all-unitary structure but rejected the proposed merger for the reasons given in his statement and written answers of 21 March, *Official Report,* columns *123* and *145.*

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how he will compensate the six new unitary authorities in Berkshire for the extra costs incurred by entering into separate contracts for highway maintenance, electrical engineering and highway and planning services. [27854]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The effect of the regulations that we have made is that contracts of an abolished authority will normally pass to its successor authorities on reorganisation. Authorities may negotiate different contractual arrangements if they wish: presumably, they would do so only if they judged that making the change would improve cost-effectiveness.

Urban Development Corporations

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has made to other Government Departments within the last year regarding urban development corporations to ensure their efficiency and cost-effectiveness. [27790]

Sir Paul Beresford: None.

Defective Housing

Mr. Dunn: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the names, style and variety of precast concrete materials used in the construction of public sector housing; and which types were deemed to be faulty and as such qualified for financial compensation. [28154]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Precast concrete has been used for a wide variety of purposes in public sector housing since the early 1900s; a definitive list is not available. The following types of properties have been designated in England by the Secretary of State under part XVI if the Housing Act 1985:

Type	*Main construction element*	*Qualifying defect*
Airey	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Boot	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Boswell	In Situ concrete	C
Cornish Unit	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Dorran	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Dyke	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Gregory	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Myton	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Newland	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Orlit	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Parkinson	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Reema Hollow Panel	Precast reinforced concrete	A

Type	Main construction element	Qualifying defect
Schindler/Hawksley SGS	In Situ concrete	A
Smith	Precast concrete	B
Stent	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Stonecrete	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Tarran	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Underdown	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Unity/Butterley	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Waller	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Wates	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Wessex	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Winget	Precast reinforced concrete	A
Woolaway	Precast reinforced concrete	A

Qualifying defect:

A: Ineffective protection of the embedded steel in the reinforced concrete loadbearing parts of the buildings.

B: In effective protection of the embedded steel handling reinforcement in the concrete panels forming part of the loadbearing walls.

C: (a) Aggregate containing excessive quantities of unburnt coal in concrete forming the walls, floors or foundations of the dwelling; or

(b) ineffective protection of the embedded steel in any precast reinforced concrete parts of the dwelling.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Goodson-Wickes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his decision on the final caps for the nine local authorities which challenged their cap; and if he will make a statement. [28539]

Mr. Gummer: I have laid before the House a draft order, under section 57 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, setting out our decisions on the final caps for Devon, Gloucestershire, Shropshire and Somerset county councils, Barnsley, Newcastle and Sheffield metropolitan district councils, Norwich city council and Lincolnshire police authority.

We have considered very carefully all the available relevant information, including the case made by the authorities in support of a higher cap, before taking our decisions. We have decided to increase the proposed caps for Somerset and Lincolnshire police by £2.6 million and £1.82 million respectively, to allow the budgets set by the authorities to remain unaltered; and to increase Barnsley's cap by £2 million, £1.09 million less than requested by the authorities.

The cap proposed for the other authorities have been confirmed.

The caps are, in our view, reasonable, appropriate and achievable in all the circumstances of the authorities concerned. These decisions will reduce public expenditure, and the burden on council taxpayers in the areas concerned by £24 million in 1995–96.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Attorney-General on what dates he or other Ministers or former Ministers in his Department received extracts for comment from Sir Richard Scott's draft report; on what date comments were submitted to Sir Richard; and what requests have been made for an extension of the period within which comments should have been made. [27553]

The Attorney-General: The Government do not disclose details of correspondence between the Inquiry and individual witnesses. In the case of draft extracts in particular, the inquiry has asked that these be treated in the strictest confidence.

EMPLOYMENT

New Earnings Survey

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to amend the new earnings survey to include low-paid workers. [24998]

Mr. Oppenheim: There are no plans to change the basis on which the new earnings survey is conducted.

Epileptics

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) what training is provided for disability employment advisers and special needs careers advisers to enable them to advise appropriately people with epilepsy about employment and training; [27764]

(2) what training welfare rights officers receive to enable them to advise appropriately people with epilepsy about welfare benefits to which they are entitled. [27765]

Miss Widdecombe: The training currently provided by the Employment Service for disability employment advisers covers a wide range of disabilities, including epilepsy. From July this year, the training will be enhanced. Training will continue to include information on specific disabilities such a epilepsy.

DEAs, like all ES client advisers, are trained on the full range of benefits available to unemployed jobseekers and to those in employment. Clients can be referred to benefits specialists within jobcentres or the Benefits Agency to assist them in making decisions about work and training opportunities or to ensure that they receive their correct entitlement to benefits. The new DEA training will include material on benefits for clients with all types of disabilities and special needs.

The skills, knowledge and attitudes required of careers officers dealing with young people with special needs are included in the post-graduate diploma in careers guidance. Careers officers must hold this or an equivalent qualification. In addition, there are specific training courses run by higher education establishments in a range of topics relating to special needs.

Employment Schemes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the numbers attending and leaving restart courses, for each year of their operation, including those who left before the completion of the course; [27520]

(2) if he will list the numbers leaving restart courses, as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers, for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme, stipulating those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who become unemployed; and, of

these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all. [27510]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Field, dated 12 June 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions about the number of people attending Restart Courses for each year of operation and the number of those who left to go into work or further employment schemes.

It may help if I explain that Restart Courses have been in existence since 1986. In April 1994 a new two week Restart Course programme was launched. These new courses combine morning attendance on the course, with individual job search activities in the afternoon. They build on the success of the original shorter one week courses and are designed to boost confidence and job search activity. There is an emphasis on making real applications for jobs and opportunities. They give people an opportunity to take a fresh look at their situation, become aware of the options open to them locally and plan positive steps back to work. During the course each person can plan the steps that they need to take to help them back to work.

The table attached shows the number of people who have attended Restart Courses and the number of referrals to a further option during the period April 1988 to March 1995. Prior to this we did not collect referral information.

From April 1994 information has been collected on the total number of starts resulting from a referral. Between April 1994 and March 1995, 21% of Restart Course completers started a job, an Employment Department employment or training programme or another option.

We do not keep records of the qualification that Restart Course leavers go on to obtain.

From April 1995 we will be able to supply separate figures for starts into jobs, and Employment Department or training programme or another option.

I hope this is helpful.

Restart courses

	Starters	*Completers*	*Non-completers*	*Jobs*	*Referrals* [1] *Employment programmes*	*Other*
1986/87[2]	108,885	—	—	—	—	—
1987/88[2]	48,812	—	—	—	—	—
1988/89	43,010	31,977	11,033	7,999	12,714	10,299
1989/90	41,940	33,172	8,768	8,010	19,372	9,367
1990/91	57,976	49,159	8,817	11,621	23,891	14,448
1991/92	133,840	120,422	13,418	32,974	43,176	51,458
1992/93	124,705	111,559	13,146	32,099	55,885	49,127
1993/94	143,280	129,943	13,337	37,156	57,844	64,028
1994/95	147,120	126,772	20,348	56,110	71,605	38,829
Total	849,568	603,004	88,867	183,969	284,487	237,556

[1] Participants may be referred to more than one option.
[2] Information about completers and referrals is not available for this period.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the numbers attending and leaving jobplan workshops, for each year of their operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27522]

(2) if he will list the numbers leaving jobplan workshops, as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers, for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme, stipulating those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who become unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all. [27512]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Field, dated 12 June 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about Jobplan workshops. You have asked about the number of attenders and outcomes since the programme was launched in April 1993.

It may help if I explain that Jobplan workshops are short five day courses for people who have been unemployed for a year, who decline or fail to take up a job or a place on an Employment Department programme at their Restart interview. It aims to help people compete more successfully for jobs and opportunities by allowing them to review their strengths and skills and establish clear job goals. This will help them draw up a comprehensive Action Plan, which maps out the steps they need to take to get them back to work.

Jobplan workshops were launched in April 1993 and the figures in the table attached show the number of people who have taken part in the workshops and the subsequent opportunities to which they were referred during the period April 1993 to March 1995. We do not keep records of qualifications that Jobplan leavers go on to obtain.

Since April 1993, 94% of workshop completers were referred to a job or an Employment Department employment or training programme or another option to help them back to work.

From April 1994 information has been collected on the total number of starts resulting from such referrals. Between April 1994 and March 1995, 26% of Jobplan completers started either a job, an Employment Department employment or training programme or another option. From April 1995 we will be able to supply separate figures for starts in each of these categories.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobplan

	Starters	Completers	Non-completers	Jobs	Referrals [1] Employment programmes	Other
1993–94	301,807	276,864	24,943	86,774	165,873	96,809
1994–95	248,388	228,309	20,079	79,046	150,223	73,932
Total	550,195	505,173	45,022	165,820	316,096	170,741

[1] Participants may be referred to more than one option.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the numbers attending and leaving job clubs, for each year of their operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27521]

(2) if he will list the numbers leaving job clubs, as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers, for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme, stipulating those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who become unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all. [27511]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the questions has been delegated to the Employment Service Agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. Frank Field, dated 12 June 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your questions to him about the numbers of people attending and leaving Jobclubs for each year of their operation and the outcomes from them. This is something which falls within the responsibilities delegated to me as Chief Executive of the Agency.

Jobclubs were first introduced in Great Britain in 1984, but comprehensive figures on entrants, leavers and outcomes have only been collected since 1987. These are shown in the attached table, together with explanations for each category.

We do not keep a record of the qualifications obtained by Jobclub members. Additionally, we have no way of breaking down the "other leavers" category between those who remain unemployed and those who leave for other reason.

It may be helpful if I explain that Jobclubs are for those people who have been unemployed for 6 months or more. Jobclubs offer a professional approach to jobhunting—they provide the support and resources to carry out an effective programme of job search. Jobclub is a long term programme and people may attend for a few weeks or up to 6 months depending on how long it takes to find work. Around 50 per cent. of members leave Jobclub with a job, and others go into training, further education or self employment.

I hope this is helpful.

Jobclub management information 1987–88 to 1994–95

Year	Number attending (entrants)	Number leaving (leavers)	Number leaving into jobs	Leaving into jobs (per cent.)	Other final outputs [1]	Other final outputs (per cent.)	Other leavers [2]	Other leavers (per cent.)
1987–88	117,748	105,677	57,080	54	14,883	14	33,714	32
1988–89	136,672	132,262	71,495	54	20,056	15	40,711	31
1989–90	145,089	140,095	72,977	52	21,336	15	45,782	33
1990–91	140,774	134,712	65,498	49	21,377	16	47,837	36
1991–92	190,117	176,140	76,831	44	26,082	15	73,227	42
1992–93	220,997	216,679	96,925	45	30,953	14	88.801	41
1993–94	249,107	231,325	105,678	46	29,992	13	95,655	41
1994–95	266,422	264,790	113,768	43	29,849	11	121,173	46
Total	1,466,926	1,401,680	660,252	47	194,528	14	546,900	39

[1] Other final outputs—people leaving Jobclub who go into ES/ED programmes, further/higher education, other training, voluntary work etc. We do not track the progress of people centrally, after they leave Jobclub.
[2] Other leavers—people leaving Jobclub who do not go into jobs or other final outputs. We do not keep information relating to the unemployment status of these people centrally.

Part-time Employment

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of state for Employment how many people are currently in part-time employment; and what was the position in 1979. [26385]

Mr. Oppenheim: In December 1994, there were 6,290,000 part-time employees in employment in the United Kingdom. An equivalent figure for June 1979 is unavailable; however, the census of employment shows there were 4,472,000 part-time employees in the United Kingdom in June 1978.

Age Discrimination

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many outstanding vacancies have an upper age requirement on them *(a)* in total and *(b)* as a percentage of the total. [27592]

Miss Widdecombe: The Employment Service conducts periodic sample surveys of age restrictions on jobcentre vacancies. The last survey was published in June 1994.

Findings revealed that age restrictions were placed on 28 per cent. of all vacancies. This was an improvement

upon 1990 when 39 per cent. of vacancies had restrictions. An analysis of upper age limits revealed that 6 per cent. of the vacancies were closed to people aged 40 or over, while 8 per cent. were closed to those aged 60 and over.

A copy of report entitled "A Study of Age Restrictions on ES Vacancies" will be placed in the Library.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) when he last issued guidelines to the Employment Service on how to combat age discrimination; [27593]

(2) if he will publish the guidelines issued to the Employment Service about combating age discrimination. [27594]

Miss Widdecombe: The chief executive of the Employment Service is responsible for issuing guidance on operational matters.

Guidance to ES staff on how to combat age discrimination was last issued in March 1994. This guidance instructs staff in jobcentres to challenge age restrictions placed on job vacancies and to persuade employers to consider jobseekers on their merits.

Where employers insist on imposing age limits, they are reluctantly accepted. However, jobcentre staff are then encouraged to approach an employer on behalf of an otherwise suitable jobseeker who falls outside the stated age limit.

While it is not normal practice to publish guidance prepared for ES staff, a copy of the leaflet "What's Age Got To Do With It?" is available in the Library. This leaflet brings together advice contained in a number of handbooks which are issued to ES staff.

TREASURY

Caravans and Leisure Parks

Mr. Hicks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current position in respect of the 1995 revaluation of caravan and leisure parks following the discussions between representatives of the leisure caravan industry and the Valuation Office agency; when he expects a national agreement to be reached similar to the one reached in 1990; what further meetings are planned; and if he will make a statement. [27795]

Mr. Nelson: Two meetings took place in April between the representatives of the leisure caravan industry and the Valuation Office agency. At the second meeting on 28 April, the representatives of the industry undertook to select representative sites to be considered in detail. It is expected that they will assemble financial and other information on the individual sites by mid-June to enable discussions to resume. If, as is hoped, a national agreement can be reached on the way in which the sites should be valued, valuation officers will take steps to implement any changes which are necessary.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the cost to the Exchequer of reducing the rate of value-added tax on energy-saving materials from 17.5 per cent. to 8 per cent. [28148]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There is no definitive list of energy-saving materials in existence; therefore it is impossible to quantify the cost to the Exchequer of taking such action.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the annual cost to the Exchequer of reducing the top rate of value-added tax from 17.5 per cent. to 16.5 per cent. [28149]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The estimated cost in 1995–96, published by Her Majesty's Treasury in the "Tax Ready Reckoner and Tax Reliefs", was £2.6 billion. A new estimate will be published this July.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the revenue impact on the Government of reducing the rate of value added tax on domestic fuel from 8 per cent. to 5 per cent. [28141]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The estimated loss in revenue in 1995–96 from a three percentage point reduction in VAT on domestic fuel is about £500 million. It will be revised this summer. The figure is based on the costings methodology in the "Financial Statement and Budget Report".

Trading Profits

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date the table given in his answer to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby dated 25 March 1982, *Official Report*, columns *393–94*, concerning trading profits and relief from tax. [25619]

Sir George Young: The available information is shown in the table and notes.

£ million

	Manufacturing companies			*Financial companies*				*Unincorporated business in manufacturing*		
	Gross trading profits	*Capital allowance claimed*	*Stock relief claimed*	*Gross trading profits*	*Other income*	*Capital allowance claimed*	*Interest payments*	*Gross trading profits*	*Capital allowance allowed*	*Stock relief claimed*
1981	11,703	6,140	n/a	–6,750	22,747	2,130	14,823	998	99	14
1982	14,025	5,637	1,403	–7,491	24,508	2,300	15,923	938	127	13
1983	15,764	6,673	1,815	–5,831	23,869	3,638	15,060	1,280	164	13
1984	16,597	6,668	625	–8,668	27,409	6,088	18,448	1,700	217	—
1985	18,560	6,257	—	–8,478	34,888	4,607	25,328	1,730	166	—
1986	19,880	5,631	—	–8,146	36,986	3,165	25,404	1,600	110	—
1987	22,096	6,180	—	–6,830	40,379	4,441	26,466	1,970	159	—
1988	26,648	7,883	—	–10,549	47,483	7,216	31,059	2,390	214	—
1989	28,103	9,565	—	–13,631	70,172	7,172	48,855	2,490	216	—
1990	30,539	9,413	—	–14,973	85,398	7,538	64,245	2,920	258	—

£ million

	Manufacturing companies			Financial companies				Unincorporated business in manufacturing		
	Gross trading profits	Capital allowance claimed	Stock relief claimed	Gross trading profits	Other income	Capital allowance claimed	Interest payments	Gross trading profits	Capital allowance allowed	Stock relief claimed
1991	23,931	10,010	—	-16,511	78,700	5,449	59,914	2,620	221	—
1992	23,078	10,780	—	-15,480	70,239	5,329	51,577	n/a	n/a	—
1993	25,988	n/a	—	-12,291	57,333	—	38,741	n/a	n/a	—

n/a Not available.

1. For companies and financial institutions gross trading profits are as defined for national accounts purposes and are before deducting capital allowances and interest payments.
2. Manufacturing companies interest payments deducted from trading profits for tax purposes are not available.
3. For unincorporated businesses in manufacturing, gross trading profits are estimated from tax assessments and are before deductions for capital.
4. Stock relief was abolished during 1984.
5. All estimates are subject to revision as more information becomes available.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 25 March 1982, *Official Report*, columns *393–94*, concerning trading profits and reliefs for tax, if he will now provide and bring up-to-date the figures for taxable profits in each case. [27126]

Sir George Young: The available information is shown in the table and notes.

Income chargeable to tax

£ million

	Manufacturing companies	Financial institutions	Unincorporated businesses in manufacturing
1960	1,752	144	89
1961	1,549	181	84
1962	1,454	166	88
1963	1,531	174	94
1964	1,660	229	104
1965	1,815	380	115
1966	1,923	610	126
1967	2,069	881	130
1968	2,532	1,114	152
1969	2,326	1,025	161
1970	2,248	1,000	178
1971	2,203	1,281	202
1972	2,295	1,791	240
1973	1,915	1,624	293
1974	1,556	1,590	311
1975	2,285	1,859	344
1976	2,949	2,421	380
1977	3,456	3,563	470
1978	4,117	3,566	605
1979	3,771	2,852	741
1980	3,973	3,060	796
1981	4,155	3,053	885
1982	4,759	2,923	798
1983	5,373	3,313	1,103
1984	6,969	4,254	1,483
1985	10,240	7,716	1,564
1986	14,561	10,147	1,490
1987	17,278	10,333	1,811
1988	19,177	11,117	2,176
1989	18,870	10,430	2,274
1990	14,999	10,081	2,662
1991	13,426	9,079	2,399
1992	15,320	10,413	—

1. For companies, the estimates relate to income in accounting periods ending in the corresponding financial year. For unincorporated businesses, the estimates broadly refer to income earned in the calendar year.
2. For companies, the estimates include income derived from trading and non-trading sources. For unincorporated businesses, the income is from the trading activities only.

Engineering Sales

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer further to his press notice CSO (95)78 concerning engineering sales, if he will list for the categories closest to those covered by SITC division 75 the corresponding information on sales for 1994 together with his estimate of the import content. [26546]

Mr. Nelson: Information on sales and orders can be found in the CSO publication "Engineering Sales and Orders", which is available in the House of Commons Library. The category closest to SITC 75 is the aggregate "Manufacture of Office Machinery and Data Processing Equipment". Data on a current price basis may be found in table 35 and constant price; seasonally adjusted information may be found in table 74. No estimates are available on the import content of these figures but data on all imports within SITC 75 may be found in the CSO publication MM20A "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom with the World".

Crown *v.* Abraham, Allen and Henderson

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how much was paid to leading counsel in the prosecution of the Crown *v.* Abraham, Allen and Henderson; how much was paid to the costs of the entire prosecution team in the Crown *v.* Abraham, Allen and Henderson; and what additional costs were charged to the cost of the case by *(a)* Customs and Excise and *(b)* the Treasury solicitors. [27172]

Mr. Heathcoat Amory: Fees, including VAT, paid to leading and other counsel in relation to the prosecution were £156,980 and £109,859 respectively. Customs and Excise estimates that its solicitor's office costs for the prosecution were in the region of £40,000. Costs billed by the Treasury Solicitor amounted to £28,300.

Eamon Collins

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if any money or other inducement was paid or offered to Eamon Collins in respect of his claim for unfair dismissal against Her Majesty's Customs and Excise—reference No. 1710/87. [27386]

Mr. Heathcoat Amory: I can confirm that no inducement was offered or money paid to Eamon Collins in respect of his claim for unfair dismissal against Her Majesty's Customs and Excise.

Nationalised Industries

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will update the figures for loans to nationalised industries in table B20 of the "Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts", 1993–94 to give figures for 1994–95 and plans for 1995–96. [27884]

Mr. Nelson: Outturn figures for loans to nationalised industries in 1994–95 are still being compiled. They will appear as usual in the supplementary statements to the "Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts", which is published each December. This exercise is constrained to outturn figures, and does not extend to the current year.

Credit Expansion

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date his written answer of 10 May 1993, *Official Report*, columns *277–78*, showing the expansion of domestic credit each year since 1952 in terms of sterling and as a percentage of the money supply and add a fresh column to show domestic credit expansion as a percentage of gross domestic product. [27435]

Mr. Nelson: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 21 July 1994, *Official Report*, columns *436–37*.

Information Technology Contracts

Mr. Cohen: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what safeguards there are for *(a)* the public interest and *(b)* the individuals upon which information is kept, in the contracts with EDS in respect of Government data; what is the overall cost, estimated or actual, to the public purse of each of the contracts; what information his Department has of commissions paid in respect of these contracts; what increases in cost are allowable under the contracts; and if he will make a statement. [27570]

Sir George Young: There are two safeguards. The first is that the contract contains provisions obliging EDS to make all necessary arrangements to protect the privacy of personal information. The second is that contractors and their employees are subject, in the same way as Revenue employees, to the criminal sanctions—a fine, or imprisonment, or both—provided by section 182, of the Finance Act 1989, for unauthorised disclosure of personal tax information.

The contract with EDS for the Inland Revenue's IT requirements is one which provides cost savings to the Department in cash terms of £225 million at 1994–95 prices with estimated expenditure of £1,033 million over the life of the contract to 2003–4.

No commissions have been paid by the Inland Revenue in respect of the letting of the contracts to EDS.

Price increases are allowable on the manpower element in the contract, subject to a cap calculated in accordance with the average earnings index.

Manufacturing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to table 15.10 of the April 1995 issue of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics", if he will now combine the table on page 96 with those on pages 97 and 98 by removing the words "manufacture of" at the beginning of each line; and if he will add to each line the relevant weight. [27499]

Mr. Nelson: The information in table 15.10 of the "Monthly Digest of Statistics" is presented in accordance with its periodical collection. The data on page 96 relate to those sectors where quarterly information is available—annual information is also presented—and the data on paged 97 and 98 relate to those sectors where only annual information is available. The Central Statistical Office will continue to publish the quarterly information on page 96 separately from the annual information on pages 97 and 98.

Details relating to "weights" for the manufacturing sector will not be added to table 15.10, but this information can be found in table 2.5 of the "United Kingdom National Accounts 1994".

Bank of England

Ms Corston: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the long-term viability of the Bank of England branch in Bristol. [27777]

Mr. Nelson: This is a matter for the Bank of England. The Bank has recently completed a review of the work of its branches and agencies. The Bank will continue and enhance the economic liaison work conducted through its regional agents, including in Bristol. It has, however, decided to cease branch banking operations and will discuss the branches' work on note distribution with the major clearing banks.

Exchange Rates

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the reasons for the change in level of depreciation since 1955. [27580]

Mr. Nelson: Exchange rates are determined in foreign exchange markets.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the impact of Her Majesty's Government's exchange rate policy in 1993 in respect of sterling and the development on the United Kingdom's balance of trade in manufactures. [27500]

Mr. Nelson: Movements in the exchange rate were considered as part of the general assessment of monetary conditions in setting monetary policy during 1993, as they are now. The Government did not and do not set a target rate for sterling.

Government Shares

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will provide a list of shares and securities held by Her Majesty's Treasury for the financial year 1994–95 on the same basis as table B13 of the "Consolidated Fund and National Loans Fund Accounts", 1993–94. [27883]

Mr. Nelson: The information requested is shown in the table.

Description of Holding	*Nominal amount £* *31 March 1994*	*31 March 1995*
Bank of England Capital Stock	14,553,000	14,553,000
BAA plc £1 Ordinary Shares	14,736,394	29,472,288
British Airways plc 25p Ordinary Shares	793,616	793,586

Description of Holding	Nominal amount £ 31 March 1994	31 March 1995
British Petroleum plc		
25p Ordinary Shares	25,305,722	25,305,722
£1 8 per cent. Cumulative Preference Shares	1,000	1,000
British Steel plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	17,044	17,044
British Telecommunications plc		
25p Ordinary Shares	15,148,074	7,623,444
Loan Stock	1,220,000,000	667,970,000
Mersey Docks and Harbour Company		
10p Ordinary Shares	1,241,180	1,241,796
Eastern Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	911,036	911,036
Debenture	50,000,000	—
Bonds 1999	59,000,000	—
Bonds 2008	59,000,000	—
East Midlands Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	532,806	474,850
Debenture	47,000,000	—
London Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	552,827	559,496
Bonds 1999	70,000,000	—
Manweb plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	577,685	582,666
Bonds 1999	20,000,000	—
Bonds 2008	37,000,000	—
Midlands Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	628,562	637,076
National Grid Company plc		
Debenture	150,000,000	—
Bonds 1997	150,000,000	—
Bonds 2001	150,000,000	150,000,000
Bonds 2008	150,000,000	—
National Power plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	249,427,890	2,958,821
Bonds 1998	350,000,000	—
Northern Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	438,505	443,807
Bonds 1999	55,000,000	55,000,000
Northern Ireland Electricity		
25p Ordinary Shares	—	1,350,627
Norweb plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	691,200	697,741
Bonds 1999	77,000,000	77,000,000
Bonds 2008	76,000,000	76,000,000
Powergen plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	156,516,610	1,973,582
Scottish Power plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	14,633,368	9,332,184
Bonds 2001	142,000,000	142,000,000
Scottish Hydro-Electric plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	6,586,865	3,813,749
Bonds 2005	116,000,000	—
Seeboard plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	1,135,607	1,149,782
Bonds 2008	54,000,000	—
Southern Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	447,211	460,289
South Wales Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	307,591	310,990
South Western Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	577,424	583,415
Bonds 2008	80,000,000	80,000,000
Yorkshire Electricity plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	612,483	544,756
Anglian Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	2,559,604	2,571,791
Northumbrian Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	256,411	256,411
North West Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	2,699,482	2,699,482
Seven Trent Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	3,557,938	3,567,089
Southern Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	1,201,801	1,209,388
South Western Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	105,174	107,800
Thames Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	3,487,833	3,487,933
Welsh Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	1,012,677	1,024,302
Wessex Water plc		
50p Ordinary Shares	594,202	604,189
Yorkshire Water plc		
£1 Ordinary Shares	1,485,628	1,500,230

Earnings

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *99*, what are the numbers and percentage in self-employment who receive *(a)* £30,000 to £35,000, *(b)* £35,000 to £50,000, *(c)* £50,000 to £75,000, *(d)* £75,000 to £100,000 and *(e)* over £100,000 annually. [27821]

Sir George Young *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* The table covers people whose main source of income assessable to 1993–94 tax was from self-employment. The bands are of profits assessable to 1993–94 tax; that is, generally, profits arising in accounting periods ending in 1992–93. Estimates for later years are not yet available.

Profits from self-employment	*Estimated numbers*	*Percentage of all whose main source of income assessable to 1993–94 tax was from self-employment*
(a) £30,000 to £34,999	72,000	2.1
(b) £35,000 to £49,999	106,000	3.1
(c) £50,000 to £74,999	62,000	1.8
(d) £75,000 to £99,999	18,000	0.5
(e) £100,000 and over	27,000	0.8

Biodiesel

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he plans to announce the rate of excise duty for biodiesel produced from crops under section 11 of the Finance Act 1993. [27090]

Mr Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* The rates of excise duty to be applied to biodiesel when used as motor fuel are already known. They are the same as that applied to the equivalent fossil fuel.

These are:

When used as a motor fuel for road vehicles: 31.32p per litre.

When used as motor fuel for other purposes: 2.14p per litre.

No duty will be charged when used as a heating fuel.

A Treasury order implementing these charges is currently being drafted and will be circulated to those concerned before the House rises for the summer recess, with a view to implementation in the autumn.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel Safety Authority

Dame Peggy Fenner: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority to publish its annual report for the year 1993–94. [28253]

Mr. Watts: The Channel Tunnel Safety Authority has now published it sixth annual report, covering the period from 1 April 1993 to 31 March 1994. I have today arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House.

A12

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current status and timetable of the dualling of each section of the A12 Ipswich to north Lowestoft; and if he will make a statement. [27246]

Mr. Watts: The roads programme contains six schemes on the A12 between Ipswich and Lowestoft as follows:

A12 Martlesham—Wickham Market Improvement (dualling)

Priority 2 (£11 million). Next step public consultation.

A12 Wickham Market to Saxmundham Improvement (dualling)

Priority 2 (£20 million). Decision awaited following March 95 public inquiry.

A12 Toxford Bypass (single carriageway)

Priority 2 (£4 million). Next stage preferred route announcement following public consultation.

A12 Blythburgh Bypass (single carriageway)

Priority 2 (£5 million). Possibility of local conference prior to public consultation in view of sensitive environment issues.

A12 Wrentham Bypass (single carriageway)

Priority 2 (£3 million). Next stage preferred route announcement following public consultation.

A12 Kessingland—Pleasurewood (standard not known)

Longer term scheme.

Mr. David Porter: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he now expects to meet the commitment in the White Paper, "Roads to Prosperity", to dual the A12 from London to Great Yarmouth; and if he will make a statement. [27245]

Mr. John Watts: In March 1994, my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State announced the results of his review of the trunk road programme. He announced that we are to improve some sections of the existing dual carriageway between M25 and Ipswich, but no longer plan a continuous dual carriageway on the environmentally sensitive section north of Ipswich. Here we propose to dual some short sections, but otherwise will concentrate on bypasses to relieve local communities.

Manchester Airport Rail Link

Mr. Terry Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the Manchester airport rail link, southern spur to begin operations. [28151]

Mr. Watts: In May 1996.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received regarding the dispute between Railtrack plc and Regional Railways, North West, over the funding of the Manchester airport rail link, southern spur. [28150]

Mr. Watts: None.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the arrangements for the financing and operation of the Manchester airport link, southern spur. [28152]

Mr. Watts: These matters are for Manchester Airport plc and the local authorities concerned, who have promoted the scheme and funded it from their own resources.

Highway Authorities

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made as to whether the proposed division of Berkshire into six highway authorities, including three covering the urban area of Reading, will facilitate an integrated approach to transport provision in the county area. [27993]

Mr. Norris: There is no reason why the proposed restructuring of Berkshire to create six unitary authorities should hinder the delivery of local transport services. It is likely that the new authorities will need to work together in this, and other areas, where strategic issues straddle authority boundaries. We already encourage such joint working between authorities, for example through the package approach for transport funding.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made as to the extent to which the targeting of expenditure on highway maintenance and road improvements will be as effective in achieving value for money and lessening road accidents if carried out within each of the six unitary authorities proposed for Berkshire as under the current arrangements. [27997]

Mr. Norris: The Local Government Commission took account of the need for efficient and effective performance of all local authority activities in making its recommendations for the restructuring of local government in Berkshire.

Drivers' Hours

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to expand liability for drivers' hours to employers; what plans he has to exclude as a defence that employers have complied with the regulations if they have warned drivers not to exceed the permitted hours; and if he will make a statement. [27760]

Mr. Norris: Under existing legislation employers can be, and are, prosecuted for drivers' hours and tachograph offences where it can be proven that they caused or permitted an offence to take place. In such circumstances, a warning given by the employer to the driver not to exceed the permitted hours might be taken into account but it would be up to a court to decide what weight, if any, to attach to such a warning.

Automated First Registration and Licensing Project

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will provide the project timetable for the introduction of automated first registration and licensing and the estimated cost of the project; and by whom the cost will be met. [27866]

Mr. Norris: A firm timetable for the automated first registration and licensing project is not yet available.

The cost of the project is to be met jointly by the DVLA and the motor industry. The DVLA's costs are a matter for negotiation with its computer contractor, EDS Ltd., and are subject to commercial confidentiality.

Traffic Area Offices

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what estimate he has made of the saving to his Department from closing two traffic area offices; [27873]

(2) what estimate he has made of the saving to an average coach or bus operator in operator licensing fees per vehicle per year from closing two traffic area offices; [27870]

(3) what estimates he has made of the saving to an average haulage operator in operator licence and vehicle fees per vehicle per year from closing two traffic area offices. [27872]

Mr. Norris: No estimates have been made by the Department of the savings to operators of closing two traffic area offices.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what the average coach or bus operator pays in operator licence fees per vehicle per year; what element of this is directly attributed to traffic area office costs excluding his Department's headquarters and central on-costs; and what estimate he has made of the average running costs of an average coach or bus. [27869]

Mr. Norris: The cost of the licence for a PSV operator is £54 per vehicle per year; approximately £18 or 33.5 per cent. of the fee is directly attributed to traffic area office costs. The average annual running costs, for a new 53-seater diesel bus was estimated at the year end of 1993 to be £28,306. Running costs include depreciation, maintenance, fuel, tyres and lubricants.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of what the average haulage operator pays in operator licence fees, licence and vehicle fee, per vehicle per year; what element of this is directly attributed to traffic area office costs excluding his Department's headquarters' costs and central on-costs; and what estimate he has made of the annual running costs of an average heavy good vehicle. [27871]

Mr. Norris: The costs of operator licensing based on an average operator with three vehicles are £665 for a five-year licence. This produces an average annual cost of £133 or £44.33 per vehicle per annum. Traffic area office costs represent approximately 27 per cent. of the total costs of goods operator licensing which amounts to an average cost of £11.97 per vehicle per annum.

Annual running costs of operating a heavy goods vehicle are not calculated by the Department.

Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he has introduced with regard to *(a)* recommendation numbers 100 and 101, *(b)* recommendation numbers 98 and 99 and *(c)* recommendation number 102 of the 18th report of the Royal Commission on environmental pollution. [27865]

Mr. Norris: The Government have welcomed the Royal Commission on environmental pollution's report as a valuable contribution to the wider debate we are encouraging on transport policy.

We recognise the value of cycling transport policies and programmes and we have made it plain in statements and within the recent transport policies and programmes guidance that we expect highway authorities to work with others to achieve better conditions for cyclists. That will inevitably include the development of sound cycle networks, building on the experience from our cycle routes programme. The Government believe that cycling proposals are most effective when they are fitted into a balanced set of measures. Accordingly, we have accepted 37 local authority transport packages for funding, the great majority of which include cycle networks or other measures that benefit cyclists. One notable example is the London cycle network, for which £3 million support will be provided in this financial year. In reaching decisions on funding, my Department looks for evidence that authorities are pursuing viable cycling policies and promoting cycling as a better alternative to the car for many journeys. In addition, I recently announced my intention to develop a national strategy for cycling.

Fatalities to cyclists and pedestrians are at their lowest level since records began in 1927. We shall continue to seek the maximum reduction in casualties, through a wide range of measures, including education, penalties for dangerous driving, research, engineering schemes and substantial publicity campaigns.

British Rail's commercial policy is to welcome cyclists and to convey bicycles whenever and wherever possible, subject to certain fees, provided this will not unduly inconvenience other passengers or displace other revenue earning traffic.

The cyclists' public affairs group, with the assistance of the Department of Transport, has produced a guidance document for rail service operators explaining how they

can make their services more attractive to the growing number of cyclists. The franchising director will send copies of the document to all bidders for rail franchises. In addition, the franchising director is currently considering whether the franchise agreement should include any provision for the carriage of bicycles on trains.

A38

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he hopes to complete his study of the options for increasing capacity on the A38 between Exeter and Plymouth; if he has ruled out the possibility of the A38 between Exeter and Plymouth being upgraded to motorway status; and what environmental assessment he has made should increased capacity on the road be recommended. [27355]

Mr. Watts: The Highways Agency has received the consultants' report. I await the agency's recommendations.

M65 (Protestors)

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer of 17 May, *Official Report*, column 245, (1) which teams of contractors and which specialist climbers were awarded the contract by the under sheriff of Lancashire to evict the protesters from Stanworth woods; if this contract went out to competitive tender; and what were the costs incurred; [27343]

(2) what sums of money from public funds have been paid, and to whom, in respect of the costs incurred by the under sheriff of Lancashire in respect of contract work to clear tree protestors from Stanworth woods between 1 and 5 May. [27171]

Mr. Watts: These are operational matters for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Ms Joan Walley, dated 12 June 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to write in reply to your Parliamentary Questions asking the Secretary of State for Transport, which teams of contractors were appointed by the Under Sheriff of Lancashire to remove protestors from Stanworth Woods; what was the cost of the work undertaken; and whether the contracts were subject to competitive tendering.

The action to evict protestors from Stanworth Woods was entirely the responsibility of the Under Sheriff. He directly recruited the specialist teams and there was no involvement by the Highways Agency.

This is not a matter for which the Agency is responsible, but we understand that the cost, to date, of the work undertaken by the Under Sheriff is some £79,000.

Overloaded Vehicles

Mr. Denham: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the annual cost of damage to roads and bridges caused by overloaded vehicles. [27148]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Mr. John Denham, dated 12 June 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question asking the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate he has made of the annual cost of damage to roads and bridges caused by overloaded vehicles.

In 1988 the Transport Research Laboratory (TRL) published a report on road wear caused by overloaded lorries. This was based on the results of ten roadside surveys of goods vehicles carried out in different locations during the 1980s. The conclusion was that for the roads covered in the survey, overloading contributed directly to 5.7% of the road wear attributable to goods vehicles.

The Highways Agency recently asked the TRL to review this figure. The latter concluded that, because of changes in the composition of the vehicle fleet, road wear caused by overloading had probably reduced slightly. Of the £360 million spent on maintaining roads comprising the trunk road network during 1994/95, we estimate that less than 5% (£18 million) was attributable to damage caused by overloaded vehicles.

As for bridges, we use historical data on traffic distribution when developing the loading standards for their design. Although there is therefore some element of initial capital cost associated with overladen vehicles, we do not have an estimate of the annual cost of damage caused by them.

Construction Industry

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what policy his Department has put to the working groups on the Latham report as to the desirability of a single exclusive register for public sector work. [24356]

Mr. Watts: None.

WALES

Health Authorities

14. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he has taken to date with regard to the establishment of new health authorities in Wales. [26044]

Mr. Redwood: No steps have been taken formally to establish the new health authorities. That will be accomplished by regulations, subject to enactment of the Health Authorities Bill.

Dental Services

15. **Mr. Ainger:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many NHS patients in Wales have been informed by their dentist in the last 36 months that they will no longer treat them on the NHS. [26046]

Mr. Richards: Around 43,000 patients have been removed from dentists registers since 1 August 1992, but many of these will have subsequently registered with another dentist. Between 1992 and 1994 the number of patients registered has remained at about 58 per cent.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the *(a)* number of adult courses of treatment, *(b)* total national health service gross expenditure, *(c)* total cost borne by the Exchequer and *(d)* total cost borne by patients, for the general dental service, for each year between 1990 and 1994. [27196]

Mr. Richards: The information is given in the following table:

	Adult courses of dental treatment (thousands)[1]	Total NHS gross expenditure (£ million)[2]	Total cost borne by Exchequer (net) (£ million)	Total cost borne by patients (£ million)
1990–91	1,190	57,055	38,923	18,132
1991–92	1,327	69,513	49,426	20,087
1992–93	1,398	73,794	53,327	20,467
1993–94	1,399	67,964	48,928	19,036

[1] Revised figures from Dental Estimates Board.
[2] Excludes refunds, which are netted off against patients fees.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the percentage of people aged five to 18 years with permanent teeth which are actively decayed, filled or missing due to decay. [27201]

Mr. Richards: A national survey of children's dental health was carried out, for the third time, in 1993 by the social survey division of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys and results published by HMSO in "Children's dental health in the United Kingdom 1993", ISBN O 11 691607 9, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. The information requested is shown in tables 3.3, 3.5, 3.7 and 3.9 of the publication. Sixteen to 18-year-olds are not covered by the survey.

Welsh Language

16. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what new programmes have been announced since the passing of the Welsh Language Act 1993 to encourage mature students to learn Welsh; and if he will make a statement. [26047]

Mr. Richards: The Further Education Funding Council for Wales is responsible for securing the provision of Welsh for adults in the further education sector. The council has ensured that Welsh for adults programmes have been maintained and developed. For the 1995–96 academic year, the council has established a new development fund which will provide an additional £300,000 in support of Welsh for adults projects to generate new provision and improve existing courses.

Part-time Employment

17. **Mr. Wigley:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the percentage of part-time workers as a proportion of the overall working population *(a)* in 1985 and *(b)* at the latest date for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement. [26048]

Mr. Redwood: According to the labour force survey, in spring 1985, some 20 per cent. of employees of working age in Wales were in part-time employment. The figure for autumn 1994 was 24 per cent.

Unemployment

18. **Mr. Roy Hughes:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is the level of male unemployment in Newport, Gwent and Wales at the latest available date. [26049]

Mr. Redwood: In April 1995, the unadjusted, male unemployment rate in the Newport travel-to-work area was 11.2 per cent. The corresponding figures for Gwent and Wales were 11.9 per cent. and 11.3 per cent. respectively.

Voluntary Organisations

19. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the value of grants from his Department to voluntary organisations in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what were the figures for 1978–79 at constant prices. [26050]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest available figure at outturn prices for direct grants is £14.1 million for 1993–94. The earliest financial year for which a directly comparable figure can be determined is 1988–89 when the equivalent expenditure at 1993–94 prices was £8.2 million.

Second Severn Crossing

20. **Mr. Simon Coombs:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what is his assessment of the effect of the second Severn crossing on *(a)* industry and *(b)* tourism in Wales. [26051]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The second Severn crossing, which is due to open next year, is likely to have a beneficial effect on many aspects of life in Wales. A report by Pieda plc in 1992, based on a survey of businesses in south Wales and Avon, concluded that the crossing would have positive effect on local trading and commercial activity and stimulate investment opportunities in south Wales. The report added that the crossing is unlikely of itself to increase tourism activities in these regions. Copies of the executive summary of the report, entitled "The Economic Impact of the Second Severn Crossing", are in the Library of the House.

Schools (Information Technology)

21. **Mrs. Anne Campbell:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what initiatives he has taken to encourage investment in IT in Welsh schools. [26052]

Mr. Redwood: On 6 April, I announced an initiative which will allow all primary schools in Wales to bid for 100 per cent. funding for IT equipment. Schools can choose between multi-media suites or portables, together with the latest and best available software on the basic subjects of the national curriculum.

The initiative will cost up to £3 million during the school year 1995–96, and will include training on the use of the equipment and follow-on training funded separately through grant for education support and training.

In addition, substantial provision has been made for primary and secondary schools through GEST to support the acquisition and greater use of IT across the curriculum. In 1995–96, this amounts to £2.7 million.

Coastal Discharges

22. **Mr. Sweeney:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what progress is being made in reducing the amount of raw sewage being pumped from Wales into the sea.

Mr. Redwood: Considerable progress is being achieved in improving the treatment of sewage discharges to Welsh costal waters. Dwr Cymru is aiming to complete its programme of improvements to discharges affecting EC identified bathing waters by 1998. It plans to invest over £400 million in the next five years, mainly at coastal sites, so that nearly all the waste water it collects will receive sewage treatment.

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the National Rivers Authority report on toxic contaminants entering the sea, published on 23 May, in regard to its implications for the Welsh coastline. [26743]

Mr Gwilym Jones: The report "Contaminants Entering the Sea" outlines the results of the National Rivers Authority's monitoring programme over the period 1990 to 1993, in line with international agreements and commitments. Progress toward meeting the commitments to reduce the quantities of contaminants entering the sea has been encouraging. For some of the most toxic metals, the authority's estimate show that the reduction targets have already been met.

The results highlighted in the report do not necessarily signify pollution of the Welsh coastline: rather, they are examples of dissolved substances which, in many cases, occur naturally in Wales. The authority advises that in the overwhelming majority of cases the concentrations of substances found are not a threat to the biology of the river or marine environment in Wales. Areas of potential concern, such as those affected by pesticides or minerals, are being reviewed by the authority's Welsh region to identify appropriate action to be taken.

Teachers

Mr. Win Griffiths: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* primary and *(b)* secondary schools teachers have been employed by each local education authority in each of the last five years. [26489]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is shown, as at January each year, in the following tables:

LEA	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Full-time equivalent primary school teachers					
Clwyd	1,662	1,657	1,686	1,690	1,643
Dyfed	1,754	1,776	1,819	1,828	1,825
Gwent	1,927	1,943	1,929	1,998	2,005
Gwynedd	1,062	1,039	1,047	1,052	1,027
Mid Glamorgan	2,538	2,688	2,643	2,648	2,649
Powys	581	600	616	593	581
South Glamorgan	1,747	1,748	1,859	1,909	1,970
West Glamorgan	1,803	1,817	1,810	1,787	1,831
Wales total	13,074	13,268	13,409	13,505	13,531
Full-time equivalent secondary school teachers					
Clwyd	1,869	1,842	1,856	1,819	1,520
Dyfed	1,614	1,639	1,654	1,732	1,651
Gwent	1,982	1,982	1,953	1,954	1,931
Gwynedd	1,245	1,188	1,196	1,189	1,158
Mid Glamorgan	2,470	2,456	2,519	2,614	2,567
Powys	632	602	607	595	615
South Glamorgan	1,821	1,809	1,768	1,839	1,614
West Glamorgan	1,665	1,655	1,671	1,541	1,579
Wales total	13,298	13,173	13,224	13,283	12,635

Source:

618G teacher statistics returns collected by the Department for Education.

The figures include: qualified teachers including on secondment; student teachers and instructors; and peripatetic teachers, advisory teachers and teachers in centres for special education.

The figures exclude: teachers at grant maintained schools; teachers at LEA maintained nursery and special schools; and teachers providing education other than at schools.

The two sixth form colleges, in Clwyd and South Glamorgan, left LEA control in April 1993 and are excluded from the January 1994 data.

Full-time equivalent of teachers employed by GM schools

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Primary schools					
Clwyd	—	—	—	—	19
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	—	—	9
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	11
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—	2
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
West Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
Wales	0	0	0	0	41
Secondary schools					
Clwyd	—	—	—	65	220
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	25	64	107
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	—
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—	—
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	147
West Glamorgan	—	—	63	62	69
Wales	0	0	88	191	544
Total					
Clwyd	—	—	—	65	239
Dyfed	—	—	—	—	—
Gwent	—	—	25	64	116
Gwynedd	—	—	—	—	11
Mid Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	—
Powys	—	—	—	—	2
South Glamorgan	—	—	—	—	147
West Glamorgan	—	—	63	62	69
Wales	0	0	88	191	584

Figures taken from the 618G returns. GM schools only.

Staff employed by the LEA, but contracted to a GM school are excluded.

The figures include: full-time qualified teachers in regular service including those on secondment; full-time equivalent of part-time qualified teachers in regular service; full-time qualified teachers in occasional service; and full-time equivalent of student teachers and instructors.

Heart Disease

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* cases of heart disease and *(b)* deaths due to heart disease were recorded for each year since 1990. [27213]

Mr. Richards: Available information on mortality from heart disease is as follows:

	Number
1990	10,972
1991	10,974
1992	10,751
1993[1]	11,873

Note:
[1] Due to changes in coding practice, 1993 data are not strictly comparable with earlier years.
Source:
OPCS.

Information on the number of cases of heart disease is not available. However, the following table shows latest estimates of hospital in-patient or day case activity in Wales where heart disease was recorded as the principal diagnosis.

	Number
1990–91[1]	24,493
1991–92[2]	29,754
1992–93[2]	32,590
1993–94[2]	33,413

[1] Deaths and discharges.
[2] Completed consultant episodes.
Heart disease is defined as international classification of diseases, injuries and causes of death, ninth revision codes 390–429.

Countryside Council for Wales

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on the transfer of resources from the Countryside Council for Wales to local authority control. [27651]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Where the Countryside Council for Wales and local authorities have general powers to act, we wish to move to a situation where a greater proportion of the work is undertaken by the local authorities. Much of this work is of a local nature and it therefore seems more appropriate that is should be undertaken by a local body. My right hon. Friend and I are consulting with local authority associations and wait their responses before deciding on the best way forward.

Repossessions

23. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for home repossessions in Wales, West Glamorgan and Neath. [26054]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Data on the number of homes repossessed are not available. Figures for mortgage possession actions taken in county courts are published by the Lord Chancellor's Department and not all orders result in repossession. The numbers of possession orders, including suspended orders, made during the first quarter of 1995 in Wales, West Glamorgan and Neath are 1,091, 174 and 82 respectively.

Grant-maintained Schools

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list for each local education authority and for Wales as a whole *(a)* the number and *(b)* the proportion of pupils in grant-maintained (i) primary and (ii) secondary schools. [26788]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is shown in the following table.

Full-time and part-time pupils in grant maintained:

	Primary schools		*Secondary schools*	
	Number	*As a percentage of the number of pupils in all maintained schools*	*Number*	*As a percentage of the number of pupils in all maintained schools*
Clwyd	488	1.2	3,558	13.3
Dyfed	0	0	0	0
Gwent	216	0.5	1,485	4.9
Gwynedd	254	1.3	0	0
Mid Glamorgan	0	0	0	0
Powys	27	0.3	0	0
South Glamorgan	0	0	3,107	11.4
West Glamorgan	0	0	967	4.1
Wales	985	0.3	9,117	4.7

Source:
Pupil numbers relate to January 1994 and are from the schools census. The status of the schools—grant maintained or LEA maintained—reflects the current position.

General Practioners

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will list those family health services authorities which have made payments under part VI, paragraph 34, section 2(u) to single-handed general practitioners' practices in their areas; [28081]

(2) how many single-handed general practitioners' practices were in receipt of additional payments under part VI, paragraph 34, section 2(u) of the NHS (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992 in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993 *(c)* 1994 and *(d)* in the current year in Wales; [28101]

(3) what was *(a)* the lowest *(b)* the highest and *(c)* the average payment made to single-handed general practitioners' practices under part VI, paragraph 34, section 2(u) of the NHS (General Medical Services) Regulations 1992 in Wales in *(a)* 1992, *(b)* 1993, *(c)* 1994 and *(d)* in the current year. [28082]

Mr. Richards: No payments were made by any FHSA in Wales between 1992 and 1994.

Mr. Ainger: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list those areas in which general practitioners' practices have qualified for additional payments for deprivation as defined under the Jarman index in each of the last five years and the current year. [28084]

Mr. Richards: From the introduction of the deprivation payments scheme in 1990–91 until April 1995, GP practices have qualified for payments for each patient who is resident in one of the wards in table 1. The wards qualifying for payments are derived in Wales using the Jarman index—based on 1981 census data—standardised morality ratios and an index derived from the housing conditions survey. The payments from June 1995 will be to GP practices for each patient resident in one of the wards in table 2. These wards qualify following the recalculation of the Jarman index using 1991 census data

and the updating of the SMRs. It is not possible to make meaningful comparisons between the two tables due to the restructuring of wards between the 1981 and 1991 censuses.

Table 1

FHSA	District	OPCS district code	OPCS ward code	OPCS ward number/ name
Clwyd	Rhuddlan	SJ	AF	No.6
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	AA	No.1
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	AJ	No.9
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	AM	No.12
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	AN	No.13
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	AP	No.14
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	AT	No.18
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	AW	No.20
Gwent	Newport	SW	AC	No.3
Gwent	Newport	SW	AF	No.6
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	AC	No.3
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	AD	No.4
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	AM	No.12
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	AQ	No.15
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	AT	No.18
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	BB	No.25
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	BC	No.26
Gwynedd	Ynys Mon	TC	AG	No.7
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AA	No.1
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AB	No.2
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AC	No.3
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AD	No.4
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AG	No.7
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AH	No.8
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AL	No.11
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AM	No.12
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	AP	No.14
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	AA	No.1
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	AB	No.2
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	AC	No.3
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	AD	No.4
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	AF	No.6
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	AG	No.7
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	AH	No.8
Mid Glamorgan	Ogwr	TF	AF	No.6
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	AA	Ferndale
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	AB	Llwynypia
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	AD	Penygraig
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	AE	Porth
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	AJ	Tylorstown
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	AL	Ystrad
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	AF	No.6
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	AT	No.18
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	AU	No.19
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	AW	No.20
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	AX	No.21
Powys	Montgomery	TL	AX	No.7
South Glamorgan	Cardiff	TN	AA	No.1
South Glamorgan	Cardiff	TN	AD	No.4
West Glamorgan	Afan (Port Talbot)	TQ	AK	No.10
West Glamorgan	Swansea	TT	AA	No.1
West Glamorgan	Swansea	TT	AP	No.14

Table 2

FHSA	District	OPCS district code	OPCS ward code	OPCS ward name
Clwyd	Rhuddlan	SJ	FN	Rhyl West
Clwyd	Wrexham Maelor	SK	GH	Plas Madoc
Clwyd	Wrexham Maelor	SK	GK	Queensway
Dyfed	Dinefwr	SN	FU	Myddnfych
Dyfed	Dinefwr	SN	FZ	Quarter Bach
Dyfed	Llanelli	SP	FG	Felinfoel
Dyfed	South Pembrokeshire	SR	FN	Pembroke Dock Llanion
Dyfed	South Pembrokeshire	SR	FR	Pembroke Monkton
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	FF	Cwm
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	FH	Ebbw Vale North
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	FJ	Ebbw Vale South
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	FM	Llanhilleth
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	FN	Nantyglo
Gwent	Blaenau Gwent	SS	FR	Six Bells
Gwent	Newport	SW	FN	Pillgwenlly
Gwent	Newport	SW	FT	Stow Hill
Gwent	Newport	SW	FU	Tredegar Park
Gwent	Newport	SW	FW	Victoria
Gwent	Torfaen	SX	FY	Trevethin
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	FD	Deiniol
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	FK	Hendre
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	FU	Marchog
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	FW	Menai (Bangor)
Gwynedd	Arfon	SZ	FZ	Peblig
Gwynedd	Dwyfor	TA	FM	Llanaelhaearn
Gwynedd	Dwyfor	TA	FS	Nefyn
Gwynedd	Dwyfor	TA	FX	Pwllheli North
Gwynedd	Dwyfor	TA	FY	Pwllheli South
Gwynedd	Dwyfor	TA	FZ	Tremadog
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FA	Aberaman North
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FB	Aberaman South
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FC	Abercynon
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FD	Aberdare East
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FF	Cwmbach
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FG	Hirwaun
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FJ	Mountain Ash East
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FK	Mountain Ash West
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FL	Penrhiwceiber
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FM	Pen-y-waun
Mid Glamorgan	Cynon Valley	TD	FP	Ynysybwl
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FA	Bedlinog
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FB	Cyfarthfa
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FC	Dowlais
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FD	Gurnos
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FE	Merthyr Vale
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FF	Park
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FG	Penydarren
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FH	Plymouth
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FJ	Town
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FK	Treharris
Mid Glamorgan	Merthyr Tydfil	TE	FL	Vaynor
Mid Glamorgan	Ogwr	TF	FA	Bettws
Mid Glamorgan	Ogwr	TF	FL	Llangeinor
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FA	Cwm Clydach
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FB	Cymmer
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FC	Ferndale
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FD	Llwyn-y-pia
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FE	Maerdy
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FF	Pentre
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FG	Pen-y-graig
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FH	Porth
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FJ	Trealaw
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FK	Treherbert
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FL	Treorchy
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FN	Tylorstown
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FP	Ynyshir
Mid Glamorgan	Rhondda	TG	FQ	Ystrad
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	FA	Aberbargoed
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	FB	Abertysswg
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	FF	Darran Valley
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	FN	Moriah
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	FQ	New Tredegar
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	FS	Pontlottyn
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	FU	St. James
Mid Glamorgan	Rhymney Valley	TH	FY	Twyn Carno
Mid Glamorgan	Taff-Ely	TJ	FG	Glyncoch
Mid Glamorgan	Taff-Ely	TJ	FK	Ilan

Table 2

FHSA	*District*	*OPCS district code*	*OPCS ward code*	*OPCS ward name*
Powys	Montgomeryshire	TL	GQ	Welshpool Castle
South Glamorgan	Cardiff	TN	FA	Adamsdown
South Glamorgan	Cardiff	TN	FB	Butetown
South Glamorgan	Cardiff	TN	FG	Ely
South Glamorgan	Cardiff	TN	FX	Riverside
South Glamorgan	Vale of Glamorgan	TP	FL	Gibbonsdown
West Glamorgan	Lliw Valley	TQ	FK	Graigfelen
West Glamorgan	Swansea	TT	FR	Penderry
West Glamorgan	Swansea	TT	FX	Townhill

University Hospital of Wales Healthcare NHS Trust

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, columns *72–73*, what was the amount of the short-term loan, the time for which it was requested, the day on which the loan was made and the day on which it was repaid [27899]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* A short-term loan of £1.3 million was made on 3 April. It was requested for a period of 15 days and repaid on 21 April, three days later than planned.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, columns *72–73*, what steps he has taken to reconcile the financial viability consultation work carried out by Secta Consultation Ltd. on the University Hospital of Wales Healthcare national health service trust with the financial deficit currently reported; and if he will make a statement. [27849]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* None. The financial viability of the trust was independently confirmed by Secta Consulting Ltd. as part of the process of assessing the application for trust status. The trust have now identified a potential deficit and are introducing measures to address in this year.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make a statement on his latest estimate of the cost of local government reorganisation in Wales. [27540]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* The costs of reorganisation will decided primarily by local government itself.

I decide how much to allocate towards local government reorganisation costs in the light of estimates submitted by local authorities in Wales. The public expenditure statement sets out the grant and capital provision available.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer to the right hon. Member for Conwy (Sir W. Roberts), of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *460*, if he will list the figures separately for the financial years 1990–91 and 1994–95; and if he will list the principle components making up the £9 million authorised retrospectively, by means of extra statutory payments. [27896]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* The level of expenditure by general practitioner fundholders from their management allowances between 1990–91 to 1993–94 was:

	£
1990–91	111,630
1991–92	519,556
1992–93	1,622,538
1993–94	2,004,934

Expenditure figures for 1994–95 are not yet available, but provisional accounts suggest that the total sum amounted to some £3.8 million.

Detailed information on the principal components are not held centrally.

Cardiff Bay

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *461*, what further approaches he has had from the World Wide Fund for Nature. [27897]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* My Department responded on 6 June to a letter dated 30 May from the head of UK programmes and European liaison, World Wide Fund for Nature about Cardiff bay barrage bird compensation measures.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *80*, what approaches have been made to landowners in Caldicot, Uskmouth and the Lougher estuary with a view to the acquisition of their land for the bird reserve connected with the Cardiff bay barrage development; on what date the landowners were approached; and if he will list the responses received. [27898]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* This is an operational matter for the corporation and I have asked the chief executive to reply.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 4 April, *Official Report*, column *1090*, what proportion of the transfer costs agreed on 27 March 1990 comprised the redundancy costs; and if he will list the non-redundancy items making up the total that his Department approved on that date. [27405]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* I refer the hon. Member to my answer of 4 April 1995. The costs agreed on 27 March 1990 did not separately identify redundancy or other items.

TACP Architects

Dr. Marek: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 19 April, *Official Report*, column *206*, which of the work was obtained by competitive tender. [25086]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 22 May 1995]:* The following Welsh Office work was obtained by competitive tender:

Landscaping at Cadoxton Barry
Commission for landscape advice

I understand from the non-departmental public bodies concerned that the following work was obtained by competitive tender:

Development Board for Rural Wales: Landscaping Ystradgynlais
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation: Landscaping design services and 19 individual projects
Countryside Council for Wales: Research on traditional orchards
Welsh Development Agency: Warren Hall feasibility study
Development Board for Rural Wales: Landscaping Ystradgynlais
Cardiff Bay Development Corporation: Landscape design services and 19 individual projects
Countryside Council for Wales: Research on traditional orchards
Welsh Development Agency: Warren Hall feasibility study

EDUCATION

Higher Education

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of Education what is the total number of students in higher education in the United Kingdom; and what were the figures in 1979 and 1985; [27758]

(2) what is the current number of overseas students studying in higher education in the United Kingdom; and what were the figures in 1979 and 1985. [27757]

Mr. Boswell: The readily available information is given in the table:

Enrolments in higher education[1] in the United Kingdom (thousands)

Year	Total	Of which overseas students
1979–80	795	[2]56
1985–86	937	[2]54
1992–93	1,444	110

Sources: Education Statistics for the United Kingdom, 1994 and 1983 editions, HMSO.
Notes:
[1] Excludes enrolments on nursing and paramedical courses—85,000 in 1992–93.
[2] Full-time only.

Epilepsy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what steps are taken to ensure that practising schoolteachers in all types of school continue during their teaching service to be provided with adequate and correct information concerning children with epilepsy; [27647]

(2) what steps are taken to ensure that teachers in training are provided with adequate and correct information concerning children with epilepsy. [27646]

Mr. Forth: The Department is planning to issue later this year guidance on managing children who require medication in schools, which will help inform both serving and trainee teachers about epilepsy.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps are taken to ensure that all pupils are in receipt within their school curriculum, of appropriate and correct epilepsy awareness information. [26789]

Mr. Forth: There is scope within national curriculum science for the teaching of issues which relate to health and well-being. Opportunities also exist within the wider curriculum, for example, through programmes of personal, social and health education, for schools to provide information about a broad range of health issues, including epilepsy.

Under-fives Education

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the standard spending assessment for under-fives education by each local education authority; and what was the actual spending on under-fives education by each local education authority at the latest date for which figures are available. [28017]

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on the standard spending assessment for under-fives education by each local education authority is contained in "The Standard Spending Assessment Handbook 1995–96", a copy of which is in the Library. Information on spending on under-fives is not available disaggregated by LEA.

Further Education Lecturers

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many further education lecturers have taken early retirement; and how many did so on grounds of ill health for each of the last five years. [27556]

Mr. Boswell: I will write to the hon. Member.

Education Course Costs

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total cost and the average cost per student of the BEd/BAQTS in *(a)* year one, *(b)* year two, *(c)* year three and *(d)* year four on courses in England and Wales. [27994]

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total cost and the average cost per student of the postgraduate certificate of education courses in England and Wales. [27995]

Mr. Robin Squire: I will write to the hon. Gentleman as soon as possible.

Teachers Superannuation Scheme

Mr. McNamara: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if the Government's proposals to privatise the administration of the teachers pension fund will require secondary legislation. [28153]

Mr. Robin Squire: Before a contractor could administer the teachers superannuation scheme, secondary legislation would be needed to delegate functions of administration to the contractor.

We have made it clear that we shall let a contractor only if it would provide better value for money than keeping the administration of the teachers superannuation scheme in the public sector.

Ethnic Monitoring

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education when she expects to make an announcement on the consultation document on ethnic monitoring of school pupils. [28020]

Mr. Forth: The consultation paper invited responses by the end of May. They are still arriving. My right hon. Friend is carefully considering them, and hopes to announce her conclusions as soon as practicable.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many responses she has received to the consultation on ethnic monitoring. [28021]

Mr. Forth: About 100, to date.

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to ensure that the ethnic monitoring of pupils analyses variations in achievement between different ethnic groups. [28022]

Mr. Forth: This is one of the issues raised in the consultations. My right hon. Friend is considering it in the light of the responses.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, column *690*, if she will list the figures for the average teacher's salary in each of the education authorities who *(a)* do not receive and *(b)* receive area cost adjustment. [28086]

Mr. Robin Squire: The latest available data are set out in the table. The area cost adjustment reflects relative costs across all salaries as well as other expenses such as higher rates.

Average Salary, as at March 1993 (provisional), of full-time teachers in the maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special education sector

LEAs which receive area cost adjustment

	Average salary £
Corporation of London	22,168
Inner London Boroughs	
Camden	22,801
Greenwich	22,922
Hackney	23,225
Hammersmith	22,633
Islington	22,501
Kensington and Chelsea	22,490
Lambeth	23,680
Lewisham	23,153
Southwark	23,475
Tower Hamlets	23,062
Wandsworth	22,546
Westminster	22,920
Outer London Boroughs	
Barking	21,926
Barnet	21,508
Bexley	21,572
Brent	23,743
Bromley	22,001
Croydon	21,881
Ealing	21,960
Enfield	21,841
Haringey	23,232
Harrow	21,437
Havering	21,646
Hillingdon	21,683
Houslow	21,136
Kingston upon Thames	21,698
Merton	22,307
Newham	22,603
Redbridge	21,849
Richmond upon Thames	21,171
Sutton	21,770
Waltham Forest	21,721

Average Salary, as at March 1993 (provisional), of full-time teachers in the maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special education sector

LEAs which receive area cost adjustment

	Average salary £
Shire Counties	
Bedfordshire	20,461
Berkshire	20,672
Buckinghamshire	20,554
East Sussex	20,402
Essex	20,945
Hampshire	20,415
Hertfordshire	20,835
Kent	20,787
Oxfordshire	20,545
Surrey	20,955
West Sussex	20,646
Isle of Scilly	20,361
Isle of Wight	20,294

Average salary, as at March 1993 (provisional), or full-time teachers in the maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special education sector

LEAs which do not receive area cost adjustment

	Average Salary £
Metropolitan Authorities	
Birmingham	20,552
Coventry	20,877
Dudley	20,368
Sandwell	20,644
Solihull	20,452
Walsall	20,571
Wolverhampton	20,586
Knowsley	20,559
Liverpool	20,573
St. Helens	20,888
Sefton	20,511
Wirral	20,782
Bolton	20,155
Bury	20,372
Manchester	21,367
Oldham	20,158
Rochdale	20,880
Salford	20,434
Stockport	20,469
Tameside	20,415
Trafford	20,584
Wigan	21,059
Barnsley	20,182
Doncaster	20,431
Rotherham	20,340
Sheffield	20,989
Bradford	20,231
Calderdale	20,553
Kirklees	20,443
Leeds	20,778
Wakefield	20,295
Gateshead	20,777
Newcastle upon Tyne	20,495
North Tyneside	20,506
South Tyneside	20,397
Sunderland	20,196
Shire Counties	
Avon	20,402
Cambridgeshire	20,285
Cheshire	20,641

Average salary, as at March 1993 (provisional), or full-time teachers in the maintained nursery, primary, secondary and special education sector

LEAs which do not receive area cost adjustment

	Average Salary £
Cleveland	20,425
Cornwall	20,752
Cumbria	20,511
Derbyshire	20,651
Devon	20,441
Dorset	20,525
Durham	20,414
Gloucestershire	20,453
Hereford and Worcester	20,732
Humberside	20,671
Lancashire	20,512
Leicestershire	20,556
Lincolnshire	20,663
Norfolk	20,653
North Yorkshire	20,526
Northamptonshire	20,372
Northumberland	20,623
Nottinghamshire	20,732
Shropshire	20,655
Somerset	20,795
Staffordshire	20,656
Suffolk	20,372
Warwickshire	20,551
Wiltshire	20,491

Source: Database of Teacher Records.

Note:

Average salary includes all allowances eg London allowance.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Disability Living Allowance

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the total number of claimants experiencing delays in respect of appeals over disability living allowance giving the figures *(a)* in total and *(b)* for each month of delay. [26785]

Mr. Hague: The information is not available in the form requested. However, I am advised by the President of the Independent Tribunal Service that, as at 31 May, the case load of the disability appeal tribunal central office, which has responsibility within the independent tribunal service for processing appeals to disability appeal tribunals, was 19,808. This figure includes, in addition to disability living allowance appeals, appeals against attendance allowance, mobility allowance and disability working allowance decisions. It is made up as follows:

(i) Appeals which have been lodged with DATCO but are awaiting the adjudication officer's submission from the Benefits Agency—4,782;

(ii) Adjourned appeals which are awaiting further information before they can be prepared for re-listing—1,648;

(iii) Appeals for which DATCO has received the submission but which are not yet ready to list for hearing because they have not completed the pre-listing procedures—6,945;

(iv) Appeals on which the pre-listing procedures have been completed and which are ready for listing—3,506;

(v) Appeals which have been listed but not yet heard—2,927

The average clearance time for an appeal to a disability appeal tribunal, that is from lodgment of the appeal to date of hearing, is 23 weeks.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what steps he proposes to take to ensure that the proposed changes in the calculations of housing benefit entitlement will not put at risk people with special needs whose rent covers a degree of social support given to them by their landlords. [26874]

Mr. Roger Evans: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has recently received the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee following its public consultation on the proposed changes to housing benefit. We will be considering carefully the position of housing where the rent covers a degree of social support as part of our response to the report.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to lay the new housing benefit regulations before Parliament. [28193]

Mr. Roger Evans: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is currently considering the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee following its public consultation on the proposed changes. He is also considering views expressed by the local authority associations. We intend to lay regulations before Parliament around the end of June.

Family Credit

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the total amount of money spent by the Government on their family credit scheme in each year since the scheme's inception. [27261]

Mr. Roger Evans: The information requested is set out in the table.

Family credit

Financial year	*Expenditure (£ million)*[2]
1988–89	394
1989–90	425
1990–91	494
1991–92	626
1992–93	929
1993–94	1,208
1994–95	[3]1,480

[1] *Source:*
Social security departmental report.

[2] The figures for the cost to public funds include benefit expenditure only. They exclude administration costs.

[3] Estimate.

Incomes and Benefits

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list the real income changes in the value of benefits to *(a)* single person, *(b)* a single parent with one child, *(c)* a single parent with two children, *(d)* a married couple and *(e)* a married couple with one and two children between 1979 and the latest available date; and if he will estimate the real increase in the average take-home pay of (i) a single person, (ii) a single parent and (iii) a married couple, including child benefit, over the same period. [27221]

Mr. Roger Evans: It is not possible to provide information in the form requested. Average earnings are not available by family type and benefits payable to different family types will depend on their individual circumstances and, in some cases, family composition.

Government policy is to uprate benefits each year in line with inflation. In addition, since 1988, extra help now worth over £1 billion in real terms has been made available to low-income families with children through income-related benefits.

EU Social Security Costs

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if it is Her Majesty's Government's policy to require the funding in each member state of *(a)* social security costs and *(b)* state pension costs under the budgetary and expenditure arrangements of the Community. [27771]

Mr. Hague: No. The Government believe that member states should remain responsible for the funding of their own social security and state pension costs through their own budgetary and expenditure arrangements.

Incapacity Credits

Ms Primarolo: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if people in receipt of invalidity or incapacity benefit are entitled to class 1 national insurance payments. [27901]

Mr. Hague: Yes. A person in receipt of invalidity benefit prior to 13 April this year or incapacity benefit thereafter is entitled to be credited with earnings equal to the lower earnings limit for class 1 national insurance contributions in respect of each week of incapacity.

Habitual Residence Test

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what estimate his Department has made of the number of dependent children with United Kingdom citizenship who may no longer qualify for benefit as a result of the changes in social security regulations dealing with the criterion of habitual residence; and if he will make a statement. [27823]

Mr. Roger Evans: Dependent children are not entitled to income support, housing benefit or council tax benefit in their own right. No estimate has been made of the number of adult claimants with such dependent children who are not entitled to these benefits because they do not satisfy the habitual residence criteria.

Child Support

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what research he is undertaking to establish to what extent unpaid child support payments are being improperly avoided; and to what extent they represent a genuine inability to pay. [27946]

Mr. Burt: The 1995–96 Department of Social Security research programme includes a planned survey of absent parents. It is intended that the survey will consider all aspects of the impact of the Child Support Act 1991.

Where arrears of child support maintenance are due, the Child Support Agency will contact the absent parent to discuss means of repayment, including reasonable instalment arrangements. In cases where the absent parent refuses to make repayment, appropriate, action to collect and enforce the arrears will be taken. The proposed departure scheme will provide additional help for the small numbers facing genuine difficulties in making payment of maintenance because of exceptional circumstances.

National Insurance

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the costs to the Exchequer of reducing the rate of employers national insurance contributions by 1 per cent. for each of the ranges of weekly earnings *(a)* below £59, *(b)* between £59 and £104.99, *(c)* between £105 and £149.99, *(d)* between £150 and £204.99, *(e)* between £205 and £440 and *(f)* above £440. [28147]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The information in respect of the 1995–96 year is in the table.

£ million

	Less than £58.00[1] pw	£58–£104.99 pw	£105–£149.99 pw	£150–£204.99 pw	£205–£439.99 pw	£440+ pw
Full year	nil	75	115	245	1,395	1,085
First year	nil	65	105	220	1,250	970

[1] The current lower earnings limit is £58.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the revenue which would be raised by charging employers' national insurance contributions at 20 per cent. for weekly incomes in excess of £1,000. [28145]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The additional revenue is estimated at £1.65 billion in a full year.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the cost of abolishing employers' national insurance contributions for employees on weekly earnings of up to and including £204.99. [28146]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The estimated cost is £2.5 billion in a full year.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the annual cost to the Exchequer of raising the starting point for paying employee national insurance contributions to the weekly earnings equivalent of the annual sum of £3,525; and what is his estimate of the number of individuals who would cease to be liable to pay employee national insurance contributions if such a change were to be implemented. [28144]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The estimated reduction in national insurance contributions from employees would be some £450 million a year. At any one time some 500,000 employees, the majority of whom would be women in part-time employment, would no longer pay contributions.

This answer assumes that employers would continue to pay contributions starting at the lower earnings limit and that there would be no change to the range of earnings governing benefit entitlements.

(Estimates based on rates for 1995–96 and the April 1994 new earnings survey).

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 13 June 1995

HEALTH

GP Fundholding, Warwickshire

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of fundholding practices have exceeded their allocated budget in each of the last three years in the county of Warwickshire and have had to seek new resources from the health authority. [27302]

Mr. Malone: The numbers of fundholders in Warwickshire who have exceeded their allocated budgets over the last three years are shown in the table.

	Total number of fundholding practices	*Number of fundholding practices exceeding their budgets*	*Number of fundholding practices exceeding their budgets by over 5 per cent.*
1992–93	9	1	0
1993–94	21	4	2
1994–95[1]	26	[2]13	5

Notes:
[1] Provisional information.
[2] Eight have an overspend of less than 1 per cent. and the highest overspend is around 7.4 per cent. A number of practices have made savings of over 10 per cent.
Source:
West Midlands Regional Health Authority.

Epilepsy

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what plans she has to ensure that people aged over 60 years with epilepsy receive treatment from specialists in neurology rather than from geriatricians; [27766]

(2) if she will provide details of her Department's planned expenditure on the provision of epilepsy services in the current financial year, in cash terms and as *(a)* a percentage of its total budget and *(b)* equivalent figures for each of the last five years, adjusted for inflation; [27762]

(3) what plans she has to include epilepsy as a condition for special attention in "The Health of the Nation"; [27572]

(4) how many specialist centres and clinics for epilepsy are currently operating in the United Kingdom; and what plans she has to increase the number; [27691]

(5) if she will instruct NHS providers to introduce a maximum waiting time for consultants to see people diagnosed as having epilepsy by a general practitioner. [27763]

Mr. Bowis: The treatment of epilepsy is a matter for clinicians, who decide on specific treatment for each individual patient based on that patient's medical history.

Information on expenditure on the provision of epilepsy services is not available centrally.

Currently, there are no plans to include epilepsy as a condition for special attention in "The Health of the Nation". The Chief Medical Officer's working group on "The Health of the Nation", however, regularly reviews and considers various conditions for such attention.

Information on the numbers of specialist centres and clinics for specific conditions is not available centrally. There are no central plans to increase the number of these for epilepsy, as this a matter for local determination.

The revised patients charter has introduced standard waiting times to first-patient out-patient consultation. This standard applies to all specialties and requires that all patients should be seen within 26 weeks of being referred to a consultant by their general practitioner, and that nine out of 10 patients should be seen within 13 weeks.

These are maximum waiting times and we would expect that patients whose clinical need was urgent should be seen much more quickly.

Disabled Living Centres

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list all disabled living centres in England and Wales; and how much her Department contributes to each of their budgets. [27,68]

Mr. Bowis: A list of all the disabled living centres is not available centrally. The Government support the work of the disabled living centres by providing funding to their representative national organisation, the Disabled Living Centres Council—£108,000 in the current financial year.

National Blood Authority

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will publish the findings of the National Blood Authority consequent to its consultations on proposals it has made for changes in the organisation of its service. [27876]

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority will make its final recommendations shortly. A copy of the authority's proposals will be placed in the Library when published.

Emergency Admissions

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been *(a)* the total number of admissions, *(b)* the number of emergency and urgent admissions and *(c)* *(b)* as a percentage of *(a)* for each year since 1988–89. [27537]

Mr. Sackville: The information is shown in the table:

Emergency admissions as a total of waiting list, booked, planned and emergency admissions

Finished consultant episodes	*Thousands*		
	(a) Total episodes	*(b) Episodes, emergency admission*	*(b) as percentage of (a)*
1988–89	6,830	3,302	48
1989–90	7,085	3,423	47
1990–91	7,082	3,452	49
1991–92	7,504	3,457	46
1992–93	7,873	3,641	46
1993–94	8,287	3,833	46

Source: Hospital Episode Statistics.

Phenobarbitone

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many reports of adverse reactions have been referred to the Committee on Safety of Medicines in respect of products containing phenobarbitone in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [27573]

Mr. Sackville: The tables shows the number of reports of adverse reactions received by the Committee on Safety of Medicines in respect of products containing phenobarbitone for each of the last five years. A report of a suspected adverse reaction does not necessarily mean that it was caused by the drug. Other factors, including the underlying disease of the patient or other drugs taken by the patient, may be contributing.

Year	*Number of reports*
1990	4
1991	0
1992	2
1993	1
1994	2

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, how many prescriptions for products containing phenobarbitone have been written for people with epilepsy in each of the last five years for which figures are available. [27574]

Mr. Malone: Information about the use of phenobarbitone products is contained in the table. It is not possible, however, from central data to identify the clinical conditions for which the drug has been prescribed.

Prescription items dispensed containing phenobarbitone, England, 1990 to 1994

Thousands

Chemical entity	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Phenobarbitone	547.8	543.9	513.0	480.5	453.0
Phenobarbitone and Phenytoin	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Phenobarbitone Sodium	0.6	2.6	2.1	0.5	1.2
Total	548.6	546.5	515.1	481.0	454.2

Notes:

1. The data are from the prescription costs analysis system.
2. The data for 1990 are not consistent with data from 1991 onwards. Figures for 1990 are based on fees and on a sample of one in 200 prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists and appliance contractors only. Figures from 1991 are based on items and cover all prescriptions dispensed by community pharmacists, appliance contractors, dispensing doctors and prescriptions submitted by prescribing doctors for items personally administered.
3. Prescriptions dispensed in hospitals and private prescriptions are not included.

DNA Analysis

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what were the results of the DNA analysis undertaken by the Forensic Science Service of tissue samples allegedly taken from a patient who died in Manchester allegedly of AIDS in 1959, which were provided to it by Central Manchester Healthcare Trust and Professor David Ho of New York. [27816]

Mr. Sackville: Tests are under way on the tissue samples at the Home Office laboratory at Wetherby. It is hoped that the results will be available shortly. The hon. Member may wish to contact Professor S. A. Moore, chairman of the trust, for more information.

Intensive Care Units, Yorkshire

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many beds there are in intensive care units in Leeds infirmary, St. James' hospital, Leeds, Pinderfields hospital, Wakefield. [27819]

Mr. Sackville: This is a matter for the Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority. The hon. Member may wish to contact Mr. John Greetham, chairman of Northern and Yorkshire regional health authority, for details.

Infant Feeding

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the estimated expenditure for 1995 for producing information on infant and young child feeding *(a)* for families and *(b)* those involved in the field of infant and young nutrition. [27928]

Mr. Sackville: As a wide range of organisations may produce such materials, I am unable to estimate expenditure.

The Department of Health spent £53,000 in producing materials in support of this year's National Breastfeeding Awareness Week held last month. We contributed £50,000 towards the costs of the "Invest in Breast" training programme produced jointly by the Royal College of Midwives and Health Visitors Association which was launched on 25 May. We provided some £55,000 in 1994–95, under the section 64 grant aid programme, to the three voluntary groups concerned with informing and supporting mothers about breastfeeding.

The Health Education Authority expended £475,000 in 1994–95 on materials—leaflets and such popular books as "Birth to Five" and "The Pregnancy Book"—which provide information on breastfeeding and other aspects of infant and young child feeding.

Bounty Packs

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what regulations are in place covering the distribution of bounty packs to nursing mothers in hospital. [27929]

Mr. Sackville: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave him on 5 April at columns *1211–12*. National health service units decide locally whether they wish to permit the distribution of bounty packs and similar packs to new mothers in their care. The packs and their contents must comply with the relevant provisions on advertising and promotion of baby milks in the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations 1995.

Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health when she expects to publish the evaluation of the homeless mentally ill initiative's clinical teams. [28848]

Mr. Bowis: The report, "The Homeless Mentally Ill Initiative—An Evaluation of Four Clinical Teams", is being published today and copies are available in the Library. I am grateful to Professor Craig and his colleagues for their work.

The homeless mentally ill initiative, organised by the Department of Health in collaboration with the Mental Health Foundation, was launched in 1990. It provides multidisciplinary community mental health teams to identify homeless mentally ill people in London who are not already in touch with statutory services. The teams assess clients' needs, provide medical and social support, and refer them to appropriate statutory services. The initiative also provides specialist hostels with a high level of care which meets immediate housing needs and offers rehabilitation before clients move on to more permanent accommodation. There is also provision of supported move-on accommodation with capital funding from the Housing Corporation.

The Government have invested over £20 million in this initiative. The five outreach teams, the eight hostels with two more to come and the move-on supported accommodation that is beginning to come on stream have begun to transform lives. It is estimated that between October 1994 and March 1995 about 115 people were rehoused, either into the specialist high care hostels or into permanent accommodation.

The report acknowledges the need for multidisciplinary outreach teams and comments favourably on the high level of direct client interaction that they have been able to attain. It also comments on the positive view taken of the teams by the majority of agencies with which they work.

Professor Craig's report contains a number of recommendations. We shall be studying these in detail and considering what action can be taken to build on the successes that he has identified.

Hyperactive Disorder

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the amount of grant aid given by her Department to *(a)* the hyperactive children's support group and *(b)* other voluntary organisations concerned with the treatment of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder for each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if she will make a statement. [26581]

Mr. Bowis: The hyperactive children's support group received grant aid from the Department of £7,000 each year from 1 April 1992 to 31 March 1995. The grant has been renewed at an amount totalling £19,000 over three years beginning on 1 April 1995. We make no other grants to organisations dealing exclusively with the treatment of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder.

GP Fundholding, Cumbria

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many fundholders there are in the county of Cumbria. [27797]

Mr. Malone: From April 1995, there have been 16 fundholding practices in Cumbria.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is her estimate of the cost in cash to health authorities in Cumbria with particular reference to the budget of the West Cumbria Health Trust arising out of individual general practices acquiring fundholding status. [27798]

Mr. Malone: Fundholding general practitioners, like health authority purchasers, are allocated their patients' fair share of national health service resources based on need. It is for NHS trusts to respond to the requirements of purchasers so that services for patients are improved.

Hospital League Tables

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much is being spent promoting the current year's hospital league tables to the editors of regional newspapers. [28000]

Mr. Sackville: Money is not being spent on promoting the league tables. Regional editors are being given the option of receiving the material in hard copy or disk format. They have also been invited to a briefing on the arrangements for publishing the tables.

Mental Health

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many people were discharged from mental hospitals in each region in each of the last 10 years. [27966]

Mr. Bowis: The number of finished consultant episodes—ordinary admissions and day cases combined—from national health service hospitals in England by main diagnosis of mental disorder and by region of treatment is shown in the table. Data prior to April 1988 are not on a comparable basis.

Finished consultant episodes (ordinary admissions and day cases combined)
1988–89 to 1993–94
Mental Disorders

RHAs	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
England	294,327	306,077	302,042	302,378	313,186	315,378
Northern	22,841	22,228	22,852	22,017	22,814	22,877
Yorkshire	21,628	22,152	24,095	20,391	24,342	24,985
Trent	28,415	28,369	31,183	32,032	32,268	31,602
East Anglian	11,454	11,936	11,890	10,452	12,471	11,525
North West Thames	19,484	24,206	17,461	17,568	18,482	19,373
North East Thames	21,294	20,451	20,581	20,807	21,792	22,436
South East Thames	21,033	19,447	19,540	18,501	19,394	19,463
South West Thames	20,063	19,858	20,218	20,929	20,680	21,313
Wessex	18,445	18,788	19,607	21,829	18,348	19,324
Oxford	10,860	11,122	11,718	11,156	12,711	12,383
South Western	24,871	25,627	24,182	23,306	25,548	26,340
West Midlands	30,800	34,801	31,562	36,539	35,824	35,447
Mersey	15,768	17,795	17,935	17,770	18,369	17,541
North Western	25,474	27,204	26,391	26,136	26,608	27,171
SHAs	1,897	2,093	2,827	2,945	3,535	3,598

Special Transitional Grants

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health which district auditors have yet to submit audited returns of expenditure by local authorities of the 1993–94 special transitional grant. [27967]

Mr. Bowis: None. All the audited returns detailing community care spending in 1993–94 have now been received.

Home Care Services

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much was spent on home care services by each authority in each of the last 10 years, expressed in 1995 prices. [28026]

Mr. Bowis: The information, expressed in 1994–95 prices, will be placed in the Library. These figures should be treated with caution as local authorities differ from year to year in their treatment of administrative and other overhead costs. Year-on-year variations may also reflect changes in types of home care service and changes of contract. New guidelines for future social services accounting have been drawn up by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the local authorities, which should result in greater consistency of reporting. Estimates have had to be made for some years for Greenwich, Hackney, Lambeth, Newham, Berkshire, Ealing, Harringey, Sheffield, Manchester and Wakefield.

Kirklees Metropolitan Council

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much money has been made available to Kirklees metropolitan council for alteration and adaptations for 1995–96 to residents' homes to allow them to stay longer in their own homes rather than in residential care; and what were the figures in each of the last 10 years. [27856]

Mr. Bowis: Expenditure by Kirklees metropolitan council up to 1993–94, the latest year available, is shown in the table.

Personal social services gross expenditure on adaptations to homes—Kirklees metropolitan council

Year	*£000s*
1986–87	100
1987–88	107
1988–89	100
1989–90	150
1990–91	393
1991–92	210
1992–93	82
1993–94	502

Information from annual revenue outturn forms (RO3) completed by the local authority.

Contract Sanctions

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what sanctions can be applied against a contractor for failing to comply fully with the specifications of a contract awarded to it by an NHS trust hospital following the market testing process. [28383]

Mr. Sackville: This depends on the terms of the contract, and on the nature of the failure to meet specified requirements. Minor or occasional failures would normally be resolved in discussion. In more serious and continuing cases sanctions might include premature termination of contract, withholding of payments pending satisfactory meeting of work requirements, or legal action for breach of contract.

Royal Liverpool University Hospital

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 applied to the contracting out and sub-contracting out of the estates department by the Royal Liverpool University hospital; and what stipulation the contract awarded made in respect of the provision of a pension scheme for those employees transferred. [28385]

Mr. Sackville: I understand that the award of the contract was on the basis that staff would transfer to the new contractor under the provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981. Pension scheme benefits for old age, invalidity and widowhood are explicitly excluded from the transfer arrangements, but the two parties to the contract have ensured accrued pension rights are fully protected and that the new employer's pension arrangements are based on the same employers contribution as the previous national health service scheme. The Royal Liverpool University hospital took legal advice that the transfer accorded fully with all statutory responsibilities under United Kingdom and European law.

Mrs. Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what representations she has received concerning the guidelines and procedures followed by the Royal Liverpool University hospital NHS trust in contracting out its estates department to Mowlem and the subsequent sub-contracting out of the department of Lorne Stewart. [28382]

Mr. Sackville: I have received representations from two hon. Members on behalf of individual constituents whose employment transferred as a result of the award of contract in this case. I am satisfied that the parties concerned have made every effort to meet all liabilities arising under United Kingdom and European law.

NHS Staff, Southwark

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women have been employed within the national health service in the London borough of Southwark as part of the South East London health authority in each of the last five years. [28352]

Mr. Malone: The information is not available centrally in the form requested.

NHS Trust, London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will state the defined interest or repayment terms on the interest bearing debt and public dividend capital of *(a)* Newham Healthcare NHS Trust and *(b)* the Royal Hospitals of St. Bartholomew's, Royal London, and London Chest Hospital Trust together with their respective payments for the years 1975–76 in respect of (i) 6 per cent. of their origination capital debt, (ii) interest and repayment of their interest-bearing debt and (iii) public dividend capital, stating the purpose of each type of payment. [28380]

Mr. Sackville: The two national health service trusts in question were established as at 1 April 1994. Information is therefore only available for 1994–95.

An NHS trust's originating capital debt is divided between a loan—on which interest shall be paid—and public dividend capital. The debt is divided on a 50:50 basis and the interest-bearing element is repayable in equal instalments over 25 years at a fixed rate of interest. The interest rate applicable to NHS trusts established on 1 April 1994 is 8.125 per cent. The actual value of the originating debt of the trusts in question is given in Statutory Instrument 1995 No. 407, dated 20 February 1995.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may determine the dividend which is to be payable at any time on the public dividend capital element of the trust's originating debt.

The NHS executive's records show that the following payments were made in 1994–95.

	Newham £	*Royal London hospitals* £
Principal	377,773	1,649,000
Interest	1,469,530	6,409,556
Dividend	720,472	2,842,485

These figures are provisional and subject to audit.

Contract income received by a trust will include a 6 per cent. return on its relevant net assets from which the trust remunerates its debt. The actual return achieved by trusts in 1994–95 will be reported in their annual accounts which will be available following audit no later than 30 September.

Veterinary Medicines

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what research her Department has *(a)* commissioned and *(b)* evaluated into the use of Baytril in farm animals and the incidence of bacterial resistance in humans; and if she will make a statement on the subject. [26783]

Mrs. Browning: I have been asked to reply.

No specific research has been commissioned into the use of Baytril in farm animals. The Veterinary Products Committee keeps the development of antibiotic resistance in humans and animals under close review. It has recently confirmed, in the light of the latest information, that no change in current licensing policy is required: new antibiotics should not necessarily be precluded from therapeutic use in animals, but their prophylactic use should be discouraged. The committee will continue to consider each case on its merits.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Biodiversity

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what action Her Majesty's Government are taking to train sufficient scientists in methods relating to the identification of species to enable the United Kingdom to fulfil obligations under the biodiversity convention; and what assessment has been made of the shortage of taxonomists. [26328]

Mr. Horam: In line with the convention, the Darwin initiative is funding about 30 projects relating to taxonomy costing over £3 million. Those projects involve the training of over 400 developing country scientists.

Responsibility for assessing and meeting the UK's needs more generally rests primarily with the scientific community in universities, institutions such as the natural history museum, and the research councils. The Natural Environment Research Council launched an initiative in 1992 to revitalise taxonomic research and training relevant to the environmental sciences, and currently supports students, fellows, and projects in the field. I understand that Edinburgh university and the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh have introduced an MSc "Biodiversity and Taxonomy in Plants" which has proved successful in attracting students from home and abroad as well as research council support. The UK Systematics Forum, funded by the Office of Science and Technology, now brings together members from across the country to investigate, among other things, ways of increasing the opportunities for training systematists.

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what measures Her Majesty's Government have taken to implement the recommendations of Lord Dainton's report on biological taxonomy. [26331]

Mr. Horam: The Government's response Cm 2243 to the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee report on systematic biology research was published in June 1993. Since then, the Office of Science and Technology has set up the UK Systematics Forum and commissioned an independent review of the UK's microbial culture collections.

The Natural Environment Research Council, through its initiative in taxonomy research and training, is currently funding six research fellowships over a five-year period at a total cost of just over £1 million. These fellowships are eligible for associated research grants, for which a further £665,000 has been committed over the same period.

Oral Scientific Histories

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, pursuant to his letter DH/94/M/1078 to the hon. Member for Linlithgow of 7 December 1994, what is the outcome of his investigation into the desirability of oral scientific histories. [26327]

Mr. David Hunt: I agree that the history of science can be enriched by oral scientific histories.

Investigations have established that a number of bodies are engaged in making such histories, including the Royal College of Physicians, the British Library, the Physiological Society and the Biochemical Society. BBC television has some recorded interviews with Nobel Laureates and other scientists who have made a significant contribution across many fields. I have asked the Office of Science and Technology to pursue the issue of oral scientific histories further with the national sound archive of the British Library.

TREASURY

Summer Economic Forecast

Mr. Andrew Smith: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the expected publication date for the Treasury's summer economic forecast. [24495]

Mr. Aitken *[pursuant to his answer, 18 May 1995, c. 307]:* The Treasury's summer economic forecast will be published on 28 June 1995. Copies will be available from the Vote Office at 11 am on that day.

Public Sector Investment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made as to how much public sector investment will change over the next three years, as measured by public sector asset creation; and if he will estimate by how much public sector investment has changed in real terms since 1989–90. [27882]

Mr. Aitken: The latest available public sector investment figures are published in table 1.7 of the statistical supplement to the "Financial Statement and Budget Report 1995–96". These cover outturn and plans from 1989–90 to 1997–98 in real and cash terms. In addition, the private finance initiative will harness private sector resources leading to more and better infrastructure projects and improved services.

Income Tax

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new income tax payers recorded in the past two years were previously non-income tax payers of pension age. [27589]

Sir George Young *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* There are about 200,000 fewer taxpayers aged over 65 in 1995–96 than there would have been if the 1993–94 tax regime had been indexed.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the categories of goods and services which currently bear value added tax at the rate of 17.5 per cent. together with the annual revenue yield from each of the listed categories. [28142]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* VAT legislation does not identify separate categories of goods and services on which VAT is chargeable at 17.5 per cent. but specifies that it should be charged on any supply of goods or services in the United Kingdom made by a taxable person in the course or furtherance of a business, except for supplies of fuel and power for domestic or charity use which are chargeable at 8 per cent., and the zero rates and exemptions listed in schedules 8 and 9 to the Value Added Tax Act 1994.

It is not possible to provide figures for the revenue yield from each individual category of expenditure.

Incapacitated Spouses

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to review the operation of the additional personal allowance for married men with an incapacitated wife. [28344]

Sir George Young: All personal allowances will be kept under review in the run-up to the Budget. In general, the Government believe that it is better to help both men and women with incapacitated spouses through the social security systems rather than through tax reliefs.

Wild Flowers

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether Customs and Excise, in examining dried flowers entering Britain, differentiate those specimens collected from the wild and those originating from proven sustainable sources. [26337]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: There are no restrictions on the importation of the dried flowers currently traded, whether wild taken or not, and customs does not, therefore, seek to make such a differentiation.

Take-home Pay

Mr. Thomason: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the level of take-home pay in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* other EC countries; and if he will list the evidence on which such figures are based. [26487]

Sir George Young: Taking into account the cost of living, estimated average take-home pay for an unmarried UK production worker, under Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development definitions, is higher than in all other EU countries, except Luxembourg. Average take-home pay plus child benefit—or the equivalent in other countries—for a married couple with two children is also higher in the UK than in other EU countries except Luxembourg, Belgium and the former West Germany. These comparisons are based on figures published in "The Tax/Benefit Position of Production Workers Annual Report 1990–1993", OECD 1994, adjusted using purchasing power parity exchange rates, also published by OECD.

PRIME MINISTER

Scott Inquiry

Mr. George Howarth: To ask the Prime Minister if he will undertake an investigation into the leaking of sections of the Scott inquiry report; and if he will publish the terms of reference of the investigation; how it will be conducted; and by whom. [28379]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 12 June, *Official Report*, column *374*.

Engagements

Sir Peter Tapsell: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June. [26744]

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list his official engagements for Tuesday 13 June 1995. [26745]

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House, I shall be having further meetings later today.

DEFENCE

Nuclear Test Veterans

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what records exist of the mortality levels and cancer incidence in British nuclear test participants present at Grapple Y. [26663]

Mr. Soames: Personnel present during the test codenamed Grapple Y were among more than 20,000 British nuclear test veterans for whom mortality statistics were collated by the National Radiological Protection Board. The NRPB studies found no overall excess of mortality or incidence of cancer among test participants.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the National Radiological Protection Board has undertaken a study into the incidence of cancer in the children of nuclear test participants in the 1950s and 1960s. [26667]

Mr. Soames: No such study has been undertaken. Studies by the National Radiological Protection Board have shown no overall excess of death or cancer among British test participants. There is therefore no reason to expect an excess of death or cancer among their children.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if personnel involved in the decontamination of HMS Tracker were included in the National Radiological Protection Board studies into British nuclear test participants. [26749]

Mr. Soames: Our records indicate that some decontamination work was carried out by the crew of HMS Tracker before the ship had returned to the UK. The ship's crew were included in the National Radiological Protection Board studies. We have been unable to trace any records of decontamination work that may have been carried out following the ship's return to the UK.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if the National Radiological Protection Board study into the effects of nuclear tests upon service personnel took into account potential variations arising from *(a)* whether tests were of fission or fusion, *(b)* detonation yields, *(c)* location of tests, *(d)* duration of service in test areas and *(e)* the number of tests witnessed by each individual. [26665]

Mr. Soames: The studies undertaken by the National Radiological Protection Board looked at cancer among test participants for each of the operations that comprised the atmospheric test programme. This examined tests of different types, yields and locations. For no operation was there a statistically significant excess of cancer deaths. Analyses were performed of those groups with the potential for radiation exposure and of those with recorded external doses, as well as the duties undertaken by participants who subsequently developed leukaemia or multiple myeloma.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what mortality statistics are held by the National Radiological Protection Board for personnel serving on HMS Tracker during British nuclear tests. [26661]

Mr. Soames: Personnel serving on HMS Tracker during the nuclear tests for which that ship was deployed in a support role were among more than 20,000 British nuclear test veterans for whom mortality statistics were collated by the National Radiological Protection Board. The NRPB studies found no overall excess of mortality among test veterans.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence why Mr. Andrew Dickson of Wakefield, West Yorkshire, a British nuclear test participant, received two body scans from the National Radiological Protection Board. [26668]

Mr. Soames: That is a matter between Mr. Dickson and the National Radiological Protection Board.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how British nuclear test participants, not issued with film badges, have been monitored for potential radioactivity. [26690]

Mr. Soames: Film badges were issued only to those personnel who were considered likely to receive a measurable dose of radiation during the tests. It was considered unnecessary to monitor those who were not issued with film badges, as they would not have been exposed to significant levels of radiation.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what investigations have been conducted into the incidence of cataracts in service personnel attending British nuclear tests in the 1950s and 1960s. [26666]

Mr. Soames: As more radiation exposure would be required to produce an excess of cataracts in the population than to produce an excess of cancer, and as the National Radiological Protection Board studies have shown no excess of cancer among British nuclear test veterans, no specific study of cataract incidence has been undertaken for my Department. I understand, however, that the NRPB is itself conducting a small study in this area.

Anthrax

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent information he has received on the discovery of anthrax-contaminated seed stocks in the Irish sea. [26700]

Mr. Soames: My Department is unaware of any anthrax-contaminated seed stocks being discovered in the Irish sea.

HMS Royal Arthur

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment his Department has made of the cost to date in *(a)* rent loss, *(b)* security patrols, *(c)* boarding up, *(d)* depreciation and *(e)* vandalism in respect of empty accommodation for families and single persons at HMS Royal Arthur. [26848]

Mr. Soames: HMS Royal Arthur was previously used as a training establishment for naval petty officers and the only permanent accommodation was in the wardroom. There was no family accommodation on the site. The site is at present being sold subject to contract. To date, there has been no loss of rent, and no additional costs arising from security patrols; the site has not been boarded up; no assessment has been made of depreciation; and only minimal costs have been incurred as a result of damage by vandals.

Low Flying

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his reply of 20 April, *Official Report*, column *856*, when the investigation into the low flying incident over Barnoldswick and Earby in January are likely to be completed. [26958]

Mr. Soames: The RAF police have now completed their investigation. My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State wrote to the hon. Member on 7 June 1995 setting out their conclusions. A copy of the letter has been placed in the Library of the House.

RAF Washington Flights

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the cost by year for the last three years for the RAF's twice-weekly VC10 service between Brize Norton and Washington, USA. [27395]

Mr. Soames: The approximate costs of operating the VC10 service between Brize Norton and Washington, Dulles airport, for the last three financial years are as follows:

Financial year	*Cost £*
1994–95	6,200,000
1993–94	5,900,000
1992–93	5,500,000

Note:
These figures reflect the cost of an average flight extrapolated over the year.

Naval Exercises

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all naval exercises in United Kingdom waters in each of the last five years; which of these were in the Clyde or off the coast of south-west Scotland; and if he will make a statement. [27384]

Mr. Soames: Details of naval exercises in United Kingdom waters are not held centrally and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. However, during the last 12 months there have been 23 exercises in the Clyde and off the coast of south-west Scotland involving a combination of ships, submarines and aircraft taking part in continuation sea training.

Minefield Practice, Scotland

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what recent proposals have been considered for the use of areas in the firth of Clyde and upper Loch Fyne for minefield practice; what discussions are planned with fishing organisations on these proposals; and if he will make a statement. [27383]

Mr. Soames: Mine countermeasures actively in the Clyde area is planned to increase later this year following the move from Rosyth to Faslane of the third mine countermeasures squadron and the small ships operational training staff. A series of constructive discussions with fishing organisations on the location of this activity has been held, and further talks are due to take place later this month.

Tri-service Exercises

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all tri-service exercises in the United Kingdom mainland in each of the last five years; and which of these were located in part in south-west Scotland. [27835]

Mr. Soames: The MOD plans to conduct one major tri-service exercise each year under a series title of "Purple". The exercise may or may not be conducted wholly in the United Kingdom. Exercises follow a four-year cycle of three command post exercises or CPXs followed by a full live exercise in the fourth year. The live exercise in the period, exercise Purple Monarch, 1992, was reduced to a command post exercise following the Gulf war and was conducted in southern England and Gibraltar.

On a small scale, but also planned and conducted on a tri-service basis for specialist units, is a series of exercises termed Minibus. This series again follows a four-year cycle. The live exercise in the period was held in 1994 and the geographic area used included parts of south-west Scotland. Also planned and executed in 1994 was a bi-service amphibious exercise Royal Dawn—which included a landing phase by Royal Marines on the Isle of Lewis.

The annual tri-service Purple exercises for the five-year period were:

Year	*Exercise*	*Description*
1991	Purple Victory	CPX
1992	Purple Monarch	Live exercise planned but CPX conducted
1993	Purpose Horizon	CPX
1994	Purple Nova	CPX
1995	Purple Zodiac	CPX

Vehicle Movements

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the journeys that vehicle registration number 16 AY 51 has made in the last 12 months, with dates; from what location the journey started; what was the location of its destination; and what cargo it was carrying. [28246]

Mr. Soames: It is not our policy to disclose details of particular military movements.

Service Accommodation

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, how many units of accommodation have been sold by his Department since April 1993. [27559]

Mr. Soames: Between 1 April 1993 and 31 March 1995 my Department sold 2,925 dwellings.

Territorial Army Barracks, Cardiff

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what was the total cost of reconstructing the Park street territorial army barracks, Cardiff and the date on which construction *(a)* commenced and *(b)* was completed. [28310]

Mr. Soames: The Park street territorial army barracks in Cardiff was reconstructed between March 1993 and July 1994 at a total cost of £2,041,000.

Dartmouth Royal Regatta

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *193*, if he will consider substituting a Royal Naval Reserve vessel as the guard ship at the Dartmouth royal regatta in place of a ship from the Royal Navy. [28458]

Mr. Soames: Following a major review of the RNR nearly two years ago, we concluded that the River class minesweepers then operated by them were no longer required, given the changed operational circumstances following the end of the cold war, and advances in mine warfare and technology. Accordingly, these vessels were withdrawn and RNR personnel now go to sea in all types

of RN ships where they are employed alongside regular personnel in appropriate duties. The RNR no longer has any vessels of its own; therefore, it will not be possible for one to be sent to the Dartmouth royal regatta.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Services Ombudsman

Mr. Coe: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when the legal services ombudsman intends to publish his fourth annual report. [28621]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The legal services ombudsman will tomorrow publish his fourth annual report, and copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

State Papers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department on how many occasions since 1970 the Crown has claimed ownership of state papers held privately. [26969]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The Crown made a claim of ownership of such papers in legal proceedings in relation to the Churchill papers. Information is not collated or available centrally where more informal action has been taken.

Queen's Counsel

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will make it his policy to allow Queen's counsel a choice between uttering an oath or making a declaration to match the procedure followed by hon. Members. [27204]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Only in Northern Ireland are newly-appointed Queen's counsel required to take an oath of allegiance. The matter is therefore one for the Supreme court authorities, in consultation with the General Council of the Bar of Northern Ireland, on whose advice my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland acts in these matters.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department who has discretion to modify the requirements of the oath and declaration required of Queen's counsel. [27206]

Mr. John M. Taylor: When in November 1972 the form of the declaration made by Queen's counsel in England and Wales was last modified, Her Majesty approved the Lord Chancellor's recommendation made with the agreement of the treasures of the four inns of court and the chairman of the General Council of the Bar.

The form of the declaration made upon admission to the Faculty of Advocates in Scotland is governed by the faculty regulations. Any amendment would require the approval of the Lord President of the Court of Session.

Any modification to the oath and declaration for Queen's counsel of Northern Ireland would be made by my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the exercise of the royal prerogative. He would be advised on the matter by the Supreme Court authorities after consultation with the General Council of the Bar of Northern Ireland.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if the oath and declaration required of Queen's counsel are identical throughout the United Kingdom and Commonwealth. [27205]

Mr. John M. Taylor: In England and Wales a declaration is made by newly appointed Queen's counsel in the following terms:

> "I [A.B.] do sincerely promise and declare that I will well and truly serve Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second and all whom I may lawfully be called upon to serve in the office of one of Her Majesty's Counsel learned in the Law according to the best of my skill and understanding".

In Scotland, advocates make a declaration of allegiance when they are admitted to the faculty of advocates. The declaration, commonly known as the oath of allegiance, is made in the following terms:

> "I [A.B.] do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that I shall bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, her heirs and successors according to law".

When an advocate is granted the status of Queen's counsel in Scotland, he or she is not required to make any further declaration. The arrangements for appointment as a Queen's counsel are made through correspondence and there is no ceremony associated with appointment to this rank.

In Northern Ireland, Queen's counsel take both an oath of allegiance and make a declaration., The oath of allegiance is in the following terms:

> "I, [A.B.] do swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors, according to law".

The declaration made is as follows:

> "I, [A.B.] do declare that well and truly I will serve the Queen as one of Her Counsel learned in the Law and truly counsel the Queen in Her matters, when I shall be called upon so to do, and duly and truly minister the Queen's matters and sue the Queen's process after the course of the Law, and after my cunning. I will duly in convenient time speed such matters as I may lawfully do which any person shall have to do in the Law against the Queen. And in all other respects I will be attendant to the Queen's matters when I be called thereto".

Different procedures for the recommendation and appointment of Queen's counsel subsist throughout the Commonwealth.

Legal Aid

Mr. John Marshall: To ask the parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what is the amount of legal aid awarded to Kasim Mohamed Bacchus; and if he will make a statement about this award of legal aid; [26982]

(2) what plans he has to investigate the award of legal aid to Kasim Mohamed Bacchus. [26931]

Mr. John M. Taylor: A legal aid certificate was issued in favour of Mr. Bacchus on 13 April 1995 to cover contested matrimonial proceedings. The granting of legal aid in this case is now under investigation by the Legal Aid Board. No payments have been made from the legal aid fund to date.

If it is found that an assisted person has failed to disclose his true financial position, the legal aid certificate may be revoked. In those circumstances, the Legal Aid Board would be entitled to recover its costs in full. With regard to this particular case, I have received a full report from the chief executive of the Legal Aid Board. Because of the confidentiality provisions of the Legal Aid Act

1988, I cannot disclose further details of the information. I am, however, satisfied that the matters which were of concern to the trial judge have been fully investigated and that appropriate action will be taken.

Mr. Cousins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what were the costs of legal aid paid to each defendant in the case of the Crown *v.* Abraham, Allen and Henderson; and how much was contributed by or recovered from each defendant. [27173]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Details of the legal aid payments made to lawyers acting on behalf of the three defendants, and the amounts recovered from each defendant, are as follows:

Defendant	*Legal aid costs excluding VAT* £	*Amount recovered* £
Abraham	124,541	546
Allen	122,112	52
Henderson	232,375	5,000

Search Warrants

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) what powers he has to monitor the issuing of search warrants by magistrates; and how many representations he has received from the public in the last year concerning the issuing of search warrants; [27168]

(2) what percentage of police applications for search warrants is refused by magistrates; and what instructions and guidance are given to magistrates on how they should exercise their powers and responsibilities when requested for search warrants. [27167]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Statistics on the number of search warrants issued or refused are not recorded centrally. Individual cases are for magistrates to decide, and it is not for the Government to seek to advise them on the exercise of their judicial discretion. Home Office circular 88/1985 contained guidance on the statutory provisions for search warrants under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and was copied to the magistrates courts. I am not aware of any representations from the public about the issue of such warrants.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Statutory Instruments

Mr. Ian Bruce: To ask the Lord President of the Council if he will list the statutory instrument which passed into law during 1994 which both implement EC measures and impose fines or other penalties together with the reference number of the EC measures concerned.

Mr. Newton: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Churchill Papers

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage, pursuant to his answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *647*, on the value of the Churchill archive (1) if he will disclose the identity of the dealer in the field of antiquarian books who provided an independent valuation. [26977]

(2) if he will place in the Library the valuation report on the Churchill archive; [26960]

(3) what consideration the national heritage memorial fund gave to taking second and third opinions of the monetary value of the papers. [26959]

Mr. Dorrell: These are matters for the national heritage memorial fund, which is an independent body. I have asked the chairman to write to the hon. Member and to place copies of his letter in the Library of the House.

Ealing Film Studios

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what local and other employment opportunities he expects to be consequent upon the £2 million expenditure to save the Ealing film studios; and if he will make a statement. [27992]

Mr. Dorrell: It is too early to say precisely what employment opportunities will become available because the new owner of Ealing film studios, the National Film and Television School, is still in the process of considering how best to use the complex in future.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

11. **Mr. Tredinnick:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what proportion of the work force in the east midlands is engaged in temporary work; and how that compares with the record of other EU countries. [26517]

Mr. Oppenheim: The latest results from the labour force survey indicate that 6 per cent. of workers in the east midlands are engaged in temporary work. The share of temporary employment in Britain is among the lowest in the EC.

Job Opportunities (Former Mining Areas)

12. **Mr. William O'Brien:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assistance his Department is giving to encourage job opportunities in areas run down by mine closures; and if he will make a statement. [26718]

Mr. Paice: The Government's sound economic policies are the best way to create jobs. But, in addition, the Government have provided a £200 million special measures package for areas affected by pit closures.

Strikes

13. **Mr. Nigel Evans:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the current strike record in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Germany; and what were the figures in 1979. [26719]

Mr. Oppenheim: In 1979, the UK lost 29.5 million days, over 50 times Germany's total 0.5 million. In 1993, the United Kingdom and Germany each lost 600,000 days to labour disputes.

Social Chapter

14. **Mr. David Atkinson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what recent representations he has received from the hotel industry about the social chapter. [26720]

Miss Widdecombe: The Government's rejection of the social chapter is strongly supported by all sections of British industry, because of the damage it would have done to the UK economy and to jobs.

Unemployment

15. **Mr. Viggers:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what is the relationship between *(a)* educational and training qualifications and *(b)* unemployment. [26722]

Mr. Paice: Unemployment rates are lower among people who have qualifications.

25. **Mr. Skinner:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what, at the latest possible date, are the total figures for the unemployed in the United Kingdom; and what the figures were in June 1979. [26485]

Mr. Oppenheim: On the consistent, seasonally adjusted basis there were 2,327,900 people claiming unemployment-related benefits in April 1995 compared with 1,067,400 in June 1979.

Jobseeker's Allowance

16. **Mr. Simpson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on the effects of the introduction of the jobseeker's allowance in Nottinghamshire. [26723]

Miss Widdecombe: Jobseeker's allowance will help focus the efforts of unemployed people to find jobs and will provide incentives for them to get back to work.

Age Discrimination

17. **Mr. Robert Ainsworth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what monitoring he is doing of age discrimination in employment. [26724]

Miss Widdecombe: Age discrimination in the work place is well documented, as are the benefits of recruiting and retaining older workers—I refer the hon. Member, for example, to the *Employment Gazette,* April 1995, a copy of which is available in the Library. The campaign for older workers continues through voluntary means to persuade employers not to restrict jobs to a particular age group. I propose, through the advisory group on older workers, to evaluate the success of the campaign in due course.

19. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment whether he has assessed the success of the "Too Old, Who Says?" campaign; and if he will make a statement. [26479]

Miss Widdecombe: The success of the campaign for older workers is continually being assessed. There are encouraging signs that an increasing number of employers are reviewing age restrictions, and consequently providing greater numbers of job opportunities open to older workers.

Works Councils

18. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on works councils. [26478]

Mr. Oppenheim: Works councils are one of the many forms of voluntary employee involvement practices used by employers in the UK.

The Government are firmly committed to the principle of employers informing and, where appropriate, consulting their employees about matters which affect them. But we believe that, to be successful, employee involvement must always be voluntary.

Inactivity Rates

20. **Mr. Milburn:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will make a statement on inactivity rates. [26480]

Mr. Oppenheim: Inactivity rates in the UK are low, and activity rates are high, compared to other EU countries. Our activity rate is higher than any of the other main EU countries, and higher than most of the rest, the exceptions being Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

Labour Costs

21. **Mr. Garnier:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what assessment he has made of the effect of high non-wage labour costs on employment prospects. [26481]

Mr. Paice: Non-wage labour costs are lower in the United Kingdom than in most countries of the European Union. They contribute substantially to unit costs and therefore to the ability of a business to remain competitive and employ people.

Earnings Surveys, Isle of Wight

22. **Mr. Barry Field:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what information he has received from his officials in respect of the earnings surveys on the Isle of Wight. [26482]

Mr. Oppenheim: The published information from the regular earnings surveys is limited by the small size of the Isle of Wight population. The results of the new earnings surveys show that average weekly earnings in April 1994 were: £291 for full-time men; £237 for full-time women and £86 for part-time women.

Employment Service

23. **Mr. Evennett:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people have been placed into work by the Employment Service in the past 12 years; and if he will make a statement. [26483]

Miss Widdecombe: Over the 12 years to December 1994 there were 20.9 million job placements in Great Britain by the Employment Service, and its predecessor the Manpower Services Commission. In 1995–96, I am asking the ES to place a record 1.9 million people into work.

South Thames Training and Enterprise Council

24. **Mr. Dowd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he last met the receivers of South Thames TEC. [26484]

Mr. Paice: Employment Department officials meet regularly with the receiver.

Youth Unemployment

26. **Mr. Llwyd:** To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what initiatives are being pursued to combat the problem of youth unemployment; and if he will make a statement. [26486]

Mr. Paice: The Government guarantee a training place to all 16 and 17-year-olds not in education or employment. Modern apprenticeships, which aim to increase the number of young people training to higher levels, will add to the comprehensive range of education and training initiatives already available.

Employment Rights

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has to discuss statutory employment rights with trade unions. [24952]

Mr. Oppenheim: I met the general secretary of the MSF last November. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I have each met the general secretary of the TUC on separate occasions this year. I will shortly be meeting the hon. Member and a group of Rolls-Royce convenors.

Further Education

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers leaving the work-related further education programme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all. [27528]

Mr. Paice: None. The work-related further education programme funded developments in further education institutions to improve responsiveness to the needs of employers and individuals. There was no element of direct support for individuals.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people attended and left the work-related further education scheme in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme. [27454]

Mr. Paice: None. The work-related further education programme funded developments in further education institutions to improve responsiveness to the needs of employers and individuals. There was no element of direct support for individuals.

TVEI

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many people attended and left the technical and vocational education initiative in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme. [27453]

Mr. Paice: The technical and vocational education initiative is a national programme through which local education authorities introduce a range of measures in schools and colleges to help prepare young people aged 14 to 19 for working life. It is institutions, rather than individuals, which take part in the initiative; students do not "attend" or "leave" the programme. However, it is possible to estimate the number of students directly affected by TVEI funding.

Figures are shown in the following table:

Academic year	*Number of students (thousands)*
1983–84	4
1984–85	19
1985–86	38
1986–87	62
1987–88	117
1988–89	335
1989–90	592
1990–91	895
1991–92	1,053
1992–93	1,278
1993–94	1,281
1994–95	1,007

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the numbers leaving the technical and vocational education initiative as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all. [27527]

Mr. Paice: The technical and vocational education initiative is a national programme through which local education authorities introduce a range of measures in schools and colleges to help prepare young people aged 14 to 19 for working life. It is institutions, rather than individuals, which take part in the initiative, therefore information is not available in the form requested.

Wages Councils

Mr. Geoffrey Robinson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish a table using data from the 1994 new earnings survey relating to former wages council industries in the format of tables 30 to 53 of the 1933 new earnings survey, part B. [27243]

Mr. Oppenheim *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* As information on whether employees would have been covered by a wages board or council was not recorded by the 1994 new earnings survey, it is not possible to provide the requested tables.

Unemployed Persons (Warnings) Decisions

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many *(a)* decisions, *(b)* disallowances and *(c)* warning letters, were issued in each region and Great Britain as a whole in each quarter since April 1990 in respect of those actively seeking employment. [28118]

Miss Widdecombe: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Employment Service agency under its chief executive. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from M. E. G. Fogden to Mr. David Chidgey, dated 13 June 1995:

The Secretary of State has asked me to reply to your question about the number of decisions and disallowances in respect of actively seeking employment and the number of warning letters issued since April 1990.

The statistics you asked for on adjudication officers' decisions on actively seeking employment for each region, and for Great Britain as a whole, are contained in the quarterly summary entitled "Analysis of Adjudication Officers' Decisions". Copies are held in the Library of the House. The latest available information relates to the quarter ended March 1995.

I enclose a table showing by region, and for Great Britain, the number of warning letters issued to clients whose jobsearch activity was not considered to be adequate. This information is available for the period up to March 1995.

I hope this is helpful.

Actively Seeking Employment—warning letters issued by region and nationally for each quarter from April 1990 to September 1992

	April to June 1990	July to December 1990	October to December 1990	January to March 1991	April to June 1991	July to September 1991	October to December 1991	January to March 1992	April to June 1992	July to September 1992
Northern	789	731	695	394	365	697	438	403	300	290
Yorkshire and Humberside	714	746	637	398	403	394	359	312	282	292
East Midlands and Eastern	463	447	453	338	337	272	225	242	203	202
London and South Eastern	3,024	2,941	2,339	1,895	1,484	1,830	1,653	1,839	2,126	2,250
South Western	530	716	533	400	371	276	273	354	406	388
Wales	688	464	386	311	309	185	232	206	233	183
West Midlands	1,354	1,015	853	634	561	707	606	567	619	486
North Western	1,435	1,521	1,247	1,032	1,123	1,061	1,382	1,671	1,678	2,006
Scotland	2,234	2,149	1,623	1,001	1,022	1,134	794	1,010	887	612
Total Great Britain	11,231	10,730	8,766	6,403	5,975	6,556	5,962	6,604	6,734	6,709

Actively Seeking Employment—warning letters issued by region and nationally for each quarter from October 1992 to March 1995

	October to December 1992	January to March 1993	April to June 1993	July to September 1993	October to December 1993	January to March 1994	April to June 1994	July to September 1994	October to December 1994	January to March 1995
Northern	163	185	124	142	164	251	89	149	225	49
Yorkshire and Humberside	166	163	140	107	82	83	19	100	15	17
East Midlands and Eastern	78	98	160	139	121	35	4	10	8	9
London and South Eastern	1,758	1,515	1,007	935	682	692	499	389	1,041	321
South Western	271	349	228	369	390	555	232	172	346	537
Wales	71	72	41	31	38	69	26	57	52	20
West Midlands	235	190	153	144	170	261	92	161	193	127
North Western	1,510	1,057	601	344	206	208	129	291	276	248
Scotland	337	363	217	98	44	76	67	76	27	74
Total Great Britain	4,589	3,992	2,671	2,309	1,897	2,230	1,157	1,405	2,183	1,402

Temporary Contracts

Sir Dudley Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for setting a time limit on open-ended temporary contracts for employees. [28296]

Mr. Oppenheim: None. Contractual agreements are a matter for the parties concerned.

Personal Protection Equipment

Mr. Jim Marshall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what representations he has received concerning the Personal Protection Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 and their effect on the Sikh community; and if he will make a statement. [26617]

Mr. Oppenheim: We have received a number of representations on this issue, to which we have responded individually. The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 implement the use of personal protective equipment directive.

Youth Training

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how much is currently being spent on training schemes for 16 to 18-year-olds; how many are covered by the schemes; what changes to the schemes he is planning; and if he will make a statement. [26746]

Mr. Paice: The planned expenditure on youth training and modern apprenticeships for 1995–96 is £680 million, which will cover 150,000 first-time entrants; 243,000 will be in training during that year.

A wide range of initiatives is already available for young people aged 16 to 18 to improve their employment prospects and achievement of vocational qualifications. We are currently working with employers to develop modern apprenticeships and accelerated modern

apprenticeships, to increase the number of young people training and to increase the number achieving qualifications at supervisory and technician levels.

Since September 1994, 1,440 young people have commenced training in modern apprenticeship prototypes. It is expected that about 50 frameworks will be available for introduction across England from September 1995.

Construction Industry

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the estimated number of people employed in the construction industry within each region for England and Wales for each year since 1988. [28121]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Employees in the construction industry by standard region: December 1988—December 1994

thousands

Region	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Greater London	138	131	128	115	103	92	101
Rest of South East	184	187	185	157	148	139	144
East Anglia	34	37	36	33	34	29	26
South West	74	76	74	64	61	56	54
West Midlands	93	91	89	87	85	86	88
East Midlands	65	68	67	63	56	55	62
Yorks and Humbs	92	100	97	92	88	95	81
North West	110	114	112	100	90	88	93
North	67	70	68	67	66	63	62
Wales	43	47	46	44	41	46	40
England and Wales	900	921	902	822	770	749	751

Note:
December of each year (not seasonally adjusted).
Source:
Workforce in Employment series.

Graduate Unemployment

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *98*, if he will provide comparable information on graduate unemployment for each of the last five years. [28088]

Mr. Paice *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* Regional information on graduate unemployment, on the International Labour Organisation definition, is given in the following table:

ILO unemployed graduates of working age by region in Great Britain (spring each year, thousands, not seasonally adjusted)

Region	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Great Britain	63	98	135	170	149
North	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Yorkshire and Humberside	n/a	n/a	11	11	11
East Midlands	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	11
East Anglia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
South East	30	43	61	79	63
Greater London	19	25	31	45	36
Rest of South East	11	19	30	33	27
South West	n/a	10	11	12	10
West Midlands	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	n/a
North West	n/a	10	12	17	16
Wales	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Scotland	n/a	n/a	12	10	14

Source:
Labour Force Survey.
n/a = not available; estiamte below 10,000.

Sewage Disposal

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *104*, if he will list by area the visits undertaken by the health and safety executive inspectors to sewage disposal sites last year. [28381]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information requested is shown in the following table:

Area	*Provisional number of visits to sewage disposal sites*
South West	1
South	5
South East	1
London North	0
London South	2
East Anglia	0
Northern Home Counties	5
East Midlands	2
West Midlands	0
Wales	1
Marches	5
North Midlands	7
South Yorks and Humberside	9
West North Yorkshire	3
Greater Manchester	2
Merseyside	1
North West	4
North East	0
Scotland East	20
Scotland West	36

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *105*, how many of the Health and Safety

Executive inspectors' visits to sewage disposal activities in 1994–95 were related to the maintenance of the existing sewer network. [28172]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information is not available in the form requested.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *104*, when he expects to have finalised the guidance package on occupational health risks from sewage. [28171]

Mr. Oppenheim: The guidance package on occupational health risks from sewage is expected to be finalised towards the end of July 1995.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *105*, how many of the 104 visits to sewage disposal activities in 1994–95 resulted in *(a)* satisfactory or *(b)* critical reports. [28173]

Mr. Oppenheim: The information can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Police Discipline Records (Disclosure)

Mr. Sedgemore: To ask the Attorney-General if he will place in the Library a copy of the *(a)* advice issued in August 1992 to chief officers of police by the Director of Public Prosecutions concerning the disclosure of police discipline records, pursuant to the case of R *v.* Edwards, and *(b)* practical instructions introduced in January 1993 concerning the same matter; and which advice and practical instructions were referred to in the Crown Prosecution Service's annual report for 1992–93 at paragraph 5.1. [27439]

The Attorney-General: The guidance concerning the disclosure of police discipline records and the case of R *v.* Edwards was issued on 5 October 1992 and is referred to in paragraph 5.3 of the Crown Prosecution Service's annual report for 1992–93 rather than paragraph 5.1 of the report which refers to the director's advice on disclosure matters generally. Its purpose was to ensure a consistent approach to the disclosure of potentially sensitive information about police officer's disciplinary records.

Advice given by the Director of Public Prosecutions to the police is usually treated as confidential. However, because of the interest and importance of this subject, the advice on these issues was circulated to professional bodies and others in the criminal justice system and I have placed a copy in the Library.

The practical instructions to CPS staff referred to at paragraph 5.1 of the report supplement the separate advice on disclosure matters generally. They are confidential.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Director General of Gas Supply

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what progress has been made in discussions with the Director General of Gas Supply about her remuneration. [27562]

Mr. Heseltine: In September 1993, Ms Spottiswoode was appointed Director General of Gas Supply with effect from 1 November 1993 at the advertised salary of £70,000. This has risen to £73,725 through annual increases of 2.75 per cent. in April 1994 and 2.5 per cent. in April 1995. She was allowed to hold up to two non-executive directorships, subject to my approval and so long as any appointment did not involve a greater call on her official time than I judged appropriate. Her pension arrangements were to be broadly equivalent to the civil service pension scheme arrangements.

Subsequently, in December 1993, in response to the MMC report on gas supply, I announced my decision, subject to passage of the necessary legislation, to require the separation of British Gas trading and gas transport activities, and to accelerate to 1996–98 the introduction of competition into the domestic market. In November 1994, the Government announced that they would bring forward the necessary gas legislation in the current parliamentary Session.

The Gas Bill would substantively increase the director general's responsibilities and work load. Apart from the licensing of new domestic gas suppliers, shippers and gas transporters, she is being given new powers under the Competition and Service (Utilities) Act 1992 in respect of the industrial and commercial gas market. She is also taking over the DTI's responsibility for regulation of gas meters and gas quality.

Against this background, and following discussions with the director general, her salary is to be increased to £90,000 backdated to November 1994 when the decision on legislation was taken. It has also been agreed that she will be able to hold only one non-executive directorship, which will involve an annual commitment of not more than 12 to 20 days; and I shall need to be satisfied that the appointment will not prejudice the performance of her functions as director general.

There have been separate discussions on pension arrangements. The director general has opted to make her own independent pension arrangements to which Ofgas will contribute a sum equivalent to 19.5 per cent. of salary. This is broadly the cost of the comparable pension provision under civil service arrangements.

The remuneration of each utility regulator is a matter for individual negotiation. Information on the current salaries of the regulators of the main utilities is being placed in the Library of the House by the respective sponsoring Departments. I believe that overall the proposed changes in Ms Spottiswoode's remuneration are reasonable and fair in terms of both the changes to her own job and the remuneration of other regulators.

Compliance Cost Assessments

Mr. Tim Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those compliance cost assessments published during the latest six-month period available. [28845]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Since April 1993 the Government have required Departments to prepare and publish compliance cost assessments with all proposed legislation presented to Parliament to assess their impact on business costs. This includes a special test of the impact on small businesses. CCAs are central to the Government's deregulation initiative and are a vital part

of the decision-making process. They are used to help parliamentary consideration of regulatory proposals and to give business the opportunity to respond to such proposals.

A command paper listing 104 CCAs published between 1 July 1994 to 31 December 1994 has been presented to Parliament today by the President of the Board of Trade. Copies of the CCAs listed are available in the Libraries of the House. This is the second such Command Paper; the first listing CCA published between November 1993 and June 1994 was published on 15 December 1994 Cm 2719. Further command papers listing CCAs published in the preceding six-month period will be published at six-monthly intervals.

Balance of Trade

Mr. Battle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list for each country the United Kingdom's crude trade balance in the latest year for which figures are available. [27770]

Mr. Needham: Information is published by the Central Statistical Office in Business Monitors MM20 and MM20A, "Overseas Trade Statistics of the United Kingdom", which are available in the Library of the House.

Import Penetration

Mr. Battle: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the import penetration ratios in *(a)* computer equipment *(b)* refrigerators, *(c)* fridge freezers, *(d)* washing machines, *(e)* microwave ovens, *(f)* colour television sets, *(g)* video recorders and video disc players, *(h)* electric kettles, *(i)* dry irons, *(j)* steam irons and *(k)* facsimile transmission equipment, in the latest year for which figures are available [27769]

Mr. Needham: Available figures showing import penetration ratios in these products are published in UK markets annual reports Nos. 60, 61 and 68 for 1993, which are available in the Library of the House.

Disused Mine Shafts

Dr. Berry: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, what assessment he has made of the accuracy of the Coal Authority's records of disused mine shafts in the Kingwood-Bristol area. [27703]

Mr. Page *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* This is a matter for the Coal Authority.

Intellectual Property Rights

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what help the United Kingdom gives to developing countries in legal expertise in drawing up legal instruments for intellectual property rights. [26340]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Most of the assistance in drawing up intellectual property legislation given to developing countries is provided through the World Intellectual Property Organisation and the United Kingdom makes substantial contributions to the work of this organisation. Officials from developing countries responsible for the introduction of new legislation often make study visits to the UK Patent Office to discuss issues with my officials. My officials have also taken part in missions to developing countries and have frequently corresponded with their opposite numbers for the same purpose.

Crown Post Offices

Dr. Godman: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many Crown post offices there were in *(a)* Inverclyde, *(b)* Strathclyde and *(c)* Scotland as a whole in 1992; and how many there are currently. [27312]

Mr. Heseltine: I understand from the Post Office that the information requested is as follows:

Number of Crown post offices

	March 1992	*March 1995*
Inverclyde	2	2
Strathclyde	44	32
Scotland	92	60

Consultation about the conversion of the two Crown post offices in Inverclyde to agency status is currently in progress. The number of post offices in Scotland offering the full range of services increased from 194 in March 1992 to 202 in March 1995.

Executives' Pay

Mr. Khabra: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on executive pay. [26470]

Mr. Hall: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to control the remuneration of senior executives. [26721]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Executive salary levels and remuneration packages are matters for individual companies and their shareholders. It is not for Government to determine salaries in the private sector or to limit companies' ability to pay competitive salaries. The Government look forward to seeing the recommendations of the Greenbury committee on best practice in determining and disclosing executive remuneration.

Manufacturing Exports

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the United Kingdom share of exports of manufactures by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries in 1994; what was the corresponding percentage in 1979; and in which years since then the percentage has been lower than in 1994. [27432]

Mr. Needham: Information on the UK share of exports of manufactures by the OECD countries for 1994 is not yet available. In 1979, the UK share of exports of manufactures by the OECD countries was 8.9 per cent.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will give the United Kingdom percentage share of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries in the latest year and latest quarter and in the third quarter of 1977. [27433]

Mr. Needham: The information requested is published in table D1 of the "Monthly Review of External Trade Statistics" and is available from the Central Statistical Office's central shared database, which can be accessed from the Library of the House.

Overseas Commercial Posts

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade pursuant to his answer of 24 May, *Official Report,* column *644,*concerning the effectiveness of commercial posts overseas in increasing exports,

from what date United Kingdom exports to India have increased by 50 per cent.; what were the equivalent increases or decreases in exports to India by Germany, Japan, the USA, France and Italy; and if he will publish the percentage change in Indian imports since that date from the six countries to the latest annual quarter, and the corresponding change in exports from the six to India. [27495]

Mr. Needham: The following table sets out figures for UK-India bilateral trade in the period 1992–94 and the comparable figures for our main competitors.

G6 exports to India 1992, 1994 and percentage change

	1992 £ million	*1994 £ million*	*Percentage change*
Germany	1,034	1,351	30.6
Japan	847	1,338	57.8
USA	1.091	1,500	37.5
France	384	533	38.9
Italy	276	462	67.5
UK	944	1,311	38.9

G6 imports from India 1992, 1994 and percentage change

	1992 £ million	*1994 £ million*	*Percentage Change*
Germany	982	1,367	39.3
Japan	1,161	1,731	49.0
USA	2,155	3,462	60.6
France	410	586	43.1
Italy	437	659	50.7
UK	860	1,288	49.7

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 24 May, *Official Report*, column *644*, concerning the effectiveness of commercial posts overseas in increasing exports, if the increase in exports made possible by Action Japan or the Indo-British Partnership is likely to exceed *(a)* their foreign exchange cost, *(b)* the total cost to Government and *(c)* the benefit of a 1 per cent. fall in the real value of sterling relative to those of the United Kingdom's competitors in the relevant markets. [27504]

Mr. Needham: The information is not available.

Manufacturing Trade

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what were the terms of trade for manufacturers in the three months to *(a)* February 1995, *(b)* February 1990 and *(c)* February 1976; and if he will include for each date the figure for (i) import penetration and (ii) the UK share of exports of manufactures by the main manufacturing countries. [27496]

Mr. Needham: The terms of trade for manufactures in the periods requested were *(a)* 100.3, *(b)* 99.3 and *(c)* 85.5 compared with a value of 100 for the base year, 1990. The remaining information is not available for the months specified. However, information on the UK share of exports by the main manufacturing companies and, up to mid-1989, on import penetration for manufactures, is available on a quarterly basis: both series can be obtained from the central shared database, access to which is available in the Library of the House.

World Trade Share

Mr. Thurnham: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the trend in volume terms of Britain's share of world trade over the last 30 years for *(a)* invisibles, *(b)* visibles and *(c)* invisibles and visibles combined. [27501]

Mr. Needham: The information requested is not readily available and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. For information on value share, I refer the hon. Member to the answer that I gave on 22 May 1995, *Official Report*, column *424*.

Franchised Post Office Outlets

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many supermarkets currently designated for closure by their owners contain franchised Post Office Counters outlets. [27259]

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* The Post Office is not aware of any such cases.

Mr. Wilson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list those Post Office Counters outlets which have been relocated from Crown post offices to franchised outlets and which have subsequently been transferred to other premises, with a statement of the reason in each case. [27258]

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* I understand from the Post Office that there have been two such cases involving franchised post offices in Sutton in Ashfield and in Cinderford. At Sutton in Ashfield, the host store closed down but, in accordance with the terms of the franchise contract with Post Office Counters Ltd., the post office remained open until a suitable alternative partner and site were found. At Cinderford, the original franchisee took on the outlet on the same site as the previous Crown office with a view to changing premises later. In the event, the franchisee was unable to do this and, after a brief period of being run by Post Office Counters staff, the office was franchised to another agent at a different site.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Health Boards

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total cost, including staff time, incurred in carrying out the competitive tendering process for support services for each contract tendered by the four health boards since 1990. [25999]

Mr. Moss: The information is not available in the form requested, as not all elements of the costs can be attributed to individual contracts. However, the total cost, including staff time dedicated to market testing, incurred in carrying out the process in the four health and social services board areas is as follows:

Annual cost of carrying out the market testing process by board area

Board area	1990–91 £	1991–92 £	1992–93 £	1993–94 £	1994–95 £
Northern	9,720	0	0	0	0
Southern[1]	31,085	0	450	10,495	60,577
Eastern[2]	407,158	286,441	96,169	34,246	40,432
Western	32,000	17,000	0	0	36,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.
[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the annual value of contracts let to private contractors for each support service by each health board since 1990. [26001]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is as follows:

Annual value of contracts let to private contractors by service
Domestic services:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	0	781,711	1,007,937	0
1991–92	0	1,797,822	1,089,403	596,000
1992–93	0	1,941,071	1,236,736	943,000
1993–94	0	1,969,762	1,316,141	974,000
1994–95	0	1,974,404	1,262,924	807,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.
[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Catering services:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	0	370,267	0	3,136,000
1991–92	0	1,252,818	863,570	3,230,000
1992–93	0	1,449,072	983,570	3,327,000
1993–94	0	1,528,169	947,570	3,427,000
1994–95	0	1,415,045	831,570	2,788,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.
[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Annual value of contracts let to private contractors by service
Laundry and Linen services:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	0	0	0	0
1991–92	0	0	0	0
1992–93	0	0	0	0
1993–94	0	0	22,996	0
1994–95	0	0	162,978	0

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.
[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Other support services:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1991–92	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1992–93	774,000	469,000	515,000	482,000
1993–94	980,000	469,000	537,000	482,000
1994–95	980,000	469,000	578,000	482,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.
[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.
n/a = This information was not collected before 1992–93.

Annual value of contracts let to private contractors by service
Multi-service contracts:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	0	0	0	0
1991–92	0	0	0	0
1992–93	0	0	0	0
1993–94	0	0	0	0
1994–95	0	0	[3]414,000	[4]637,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.
[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.
[3] This contract includes Domestic, Catering, Portering, Security and Telephonist Services.
[4] this contract includes Domestic and Catering Services.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the full costs of redundancy and early retirement payments related to the tendering process made for each support service contract by each health board in the period since 1990. [26005]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is given in the table and has been extracted from the tender evaluation reports on which the award of contracts was based.

Cost of redundancy and early retirement payments since 1990 related to market testing by service and health board area

Service	Board area Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
Domestic	0	556,663	269,293	608,400
Catering	0	133,000	132,293	0
Laundry	0	0	4,520	0
Other	0	0	0	0

Notes:

[1]The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Source:

Tender evaluation reports on which the Award of Contracts were based.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the annual sum of net savings from competitive tendering contract awards of NHS support services for each year since 1990 for each of the four health and social services boards. [26009]

Mr. Moss: The information requested, which is net of market-testing process costs, HPSS staff and consultants; monitoring and contract management costs; redundancy and early retirement costs; avoidable overhead costs; and national insurance costs, is given in the table. The information relates to all market-testing contract awards both in-house and commercial.

Annual sum of net savings from market testing contract awards HPSS support services by board area and financial year

	Board area Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	178,500	642,529	810,355	993,000
1991–92	474,000	1,414,839	2,614,283	1,681,000
1992–93	624,000	1,307,736	3,734,249	2,085,000
1993–94	703,000	1,459,265	4,028,479	2,135,000
1994–95	705,000	1,743,771	4,587,776	2,412,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what have been the client side costs, including monitoring of the contract and contract management costs for each support service contract awarded since 1990 for each health board.

Mr. Moss: The information requested is not available in the form requested as not all the elements of these costs can be allocated to individual contracts. However, the information in terms of the total costs of the monitoring and contract management of all contracts, both in-house and commercial, for the support services by board area and financial year is given in the following tables.

Annual cost of contract monitoring and management by service and board area

Domestic services:

	Board area Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	16,000	19,251	70,460	0
1991–92	29,250	41,742	156,280	74,000
1992–93	60,300	42,028	192,551	70,000
1993–94	63,000	55,104	186,998	77,000
1994–95	66,600	23,735	185,389	56,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Catering services:

	Board area Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	16,000	31,367	37,540	111,000
1991–92	29,000	55,574	105,566	64,000
1992–93	60,300	55,202	172,717	64,000
1993–94	63,000	74,000	199,309	74,000
1994–95	66,600	38,368	203,684	45,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Annual cost of contract monitoring and management by service and board area

Laundry and linen service

	Board area Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	0	5,542	0	17,000
1991–92	6,500	10,698	18,548	14,000
1992–93	13,400	11,198	30,742	15,000
1993–94	14,000	16,000	43,544	16,000
1994–95	14,800	6,041	50,217	16,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Other support services

	Board area Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1991–92	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1992–93	0	0	0	0
1993–94	0	0	0	0
1994–95	0	0	0	0

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

n/a = This information was not collected before 1992–93.

Annual value of contracts let to private contractors by service
Multi-service contracts:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	0	0	0	0
1991–92	0	0	0	0
1992–93	0	0	0	0
1993–94	0	0	0	0
1994–95	0	0	9,510[3]	34,000[4]

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

[3] This contract includes Domestic, Catering, Portering, Security and Telephonist Services.

[4] This contract includes Domestic and Catering Services.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total annual expenditure on management or technical consultants engaged in the competitive tendering process by each of the health boards for each year since 1990. [26008]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is as follows:

Annual expenditure on management/technical consultants by board area

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	9,270	0	11,500	0
1991–92	0	0	67,978	0
1992–93	0	17,987	36,586	0
1993–94	0	0	0	0
1994–95	0	14,100	3,000	0

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Mr. Soley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what have been the net savings achieved for each support service put out to tender each year since 1990 for each health board. [26010]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is as follows:

Annual net savings for HPSS market testing by service and board area
Domestic services:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	[3](2,000)	193,160	615,182	—
1991–92	193,160	764,153	1,467,605	525,000
1992–93	196,000	724,894	1,798,276	846,000
1993–94	232,000	803,751	1,857,050	863,000
1994–95	296,000	865,692	1,874,103	910,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

[3] The figures in brackets represent in-house costs in excess of the agreed contract costs.

Catering services:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	12,000	429,859	173,991	955,000
1991–92	73,000	632,240	959,795	1,097,000
1992–93	191,000	553,681	1,713,157	1,179,000
1993–94	192,000	569,700	1,893,564	1,210,000
1994–95	124,000	805,980	1,869,396	1,368,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

Annual net savings for HPSS market testing by service and board area
Laundry and Linen services:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	168,500	19,510	20,882	38,000
1991–92	208,000	18,446	186,583	59,000
1992–93	211,000	[3](31,839)	197,516	60,000
1993–94	253,000	85,819	252,565	62,000
1994–95	259,000	72,162	557,977	64,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

[3] The figures in brackets represent in-house costs in excess of the agreed contract costs.

Other support services:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1991–92	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1992–93	26,000	61,000	25,300	—
1993–94	26,000	61,000	25,300	—
1994–95	26,000	61,000	25,300	—

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

n/a = This information was not collected before 1992–93.

Annual net savings for HPSS market testing by service and board area
Multi-service contracts:

	Board area			
	Northern £	Southern[1] £	Eastern[2] £	Western £
1990–91	—	—	—	—
1991–92	—	—	—	—
1992–93	—	—	—	—
1993–94	—	—	—	—
1994–95	—	—	[3]261,000	[4]70,000

[1] The figures for the Southern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area.

[2] The figures for the Eastern Board area include those for the HSS Trusts which are based within the area and the Central Services Agency.

[3] This contract includes Domestic, Catering, Portering, Security and Telephonist Services.

[4] This contract includes Domestic and Catering Services.

Farm Improvement Grants

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, when applications in respect of SPARD—farm improvement grants—will be approved and payments issued to farmers. [25940]

Mr. Ancram: Applications received up to and including 22 March 1995 will be processed and related claims paid according to the targets in "Our Service Standards". Applications received after 22 March 1995 will be acknowledged as soon as practicable, but related claims will be paid only according to the financial resources available and after the Department has discharged its obligations to those who submitted their applications up to that date.

Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd.

Rev. Ian Paisley: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the names of the directors of Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd.; how much grant has been made available to this organisation from the Government or European Union sources over the past two years; how many developments have been assisted by Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd.; what measures have been undertaken by the Northern Ireland tourist board to market or promote directly or indirectly the activities of Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd.; who are the owners of the establishments leased to Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd.; and what monitoring he has undertaken to ensure that this body, and those establishments supported by it, have not received any more preferential support in the marketing and promotion of their activities than is given to other self-catering developments in Northern Ireland. [26630]

Mr. Ancram: The names of the directors of Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd. are:

Mr. J. Armstrong
Mr. I. Henderson
Dr. D. MacNeice
Mr. G. McWhinney
Mr. D. Myles
Lord Rathcavan
Ms M. Ritchie
Mr. T. Sturgess

Over the past two years, £375,000 has been made available to the organisation from Government and European Union sources.

To date, four cottages have received assistance.

Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd. undertakes its own marketing. NITB will offer advice and support to the company on its marketing and promotional activities as it does with any tourism organisation or individual accommodation provider.

Leases have been signed with the following:

Mr. M. Jameson: Ballycastle
Mr. H. McDonnell: Glenarm
Mr. G. McKeown: Broughshane (2 cottages)

The activities of Rural Cottage Holidays Ltd. will be monitored by the Northern Ireland tourist board. The tourist board is represented on the board of the company and will ensure that the company and its properties do not receive preferential support towards marketing and promotion activities.

Grafton Recruitment

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he became aware that the chief executive of a health and social services board was the majority shareholder in a nursing recruitment agency; and what inquiries he has made into health service contracts placed with that recruitment agency. [26967]

Mr. Moss: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer I gave him on 9 June, *Official Report*, column *346*.

Northern Ireland Electricity

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what assessment he has made of the 16th report of the Committee of Public Accounts on the privatisation of Northern Ireland Electricity HC24 of Session 1994–95; and if he will make a statement. [27135]

Mr. Ancram: A response will be represented to Parliament in due course in the Department of Finance and Personnel memorandum of reply to the Public Accounts Committee report.

Early Years Services

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps he will adopt to increase the level of grant aid to the four health and social services boards in respect of early years services. [27140]

Mr. Moss: The Department of Health and Social Services allocates resources to the health and social services boards on a capitation basis. It is for the boards to determine priorities for the use of these resources within broad guidelines laid down by the Department. They do not receive grant aid, and funds are not earmarked for particular services.

In September 1994, the Government published a policy statement for the development of day care nursery education for young children in Northern Ireland. The statement announced the creation of an early years development fund, which will channel over £1 million extra over the three years ended April 1997 to early years projects in the voluntary and community sector.

This is in addition to the board's regular spending on early years services, and to recurrent grant aid of over £279,000 annually from the Department towards the regional activities of voluntary organisations in this field.

Tooth Decay

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the percentage of people aged five to 18 years with permanent teeth which are actively decayed, filled or missing due to decay. [27202]

Mr. Moss: The information for people aged five to 15 years is given in the table. Figures for ages 16, 17 and 18 are not available.

Percentage of Northern Ireland children with tooth decay

	Age										
Tooth condition	*5*	*6*	*7*	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*
Actively decayed	1	6	16	19	23	29	36	40	37	38	44
Filled (otherwise sound)	[1]—	1	10	13	23	36	53	60	68	78	73
Missing due to decay	[1]—	1	1	[1]—	5	7	11	14	11	29	21

Percentage of Northern Ireland children with tooth decay

Tooth condition	Age 5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Any decay experience	1	7	24	27	40	53	69	76	75	87	85

[1] Nil count.
[2] Less than 1 per cent.

Environmental Protection Agency

Mr. McGrady: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what progress has been made on the establishment of an environmental protection agency in Northern Ireland. [27169]

Mr. Moss: A prior options study completed earlier this year concluded that a next steps agency should be set up, within the Department, from 1 April 1996, responsible for the implementation of environmental policies in Northern Ireland. It rejected the concept of an independent environmental protection agency. Work is now on schedule to set up the new agency.

Heart Disease

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many *(a)* cases of heart disease and *(b)* deaths due to heart disease were recorded for each year since 1990. [27211]

Mr. Moss: Information on the number of cases of heart disease in Northern Ireland is not collected centrally. The number of finished consultant episodes for hospital inpatients suffering from heart disease is as follows:

	Number
1990–91	17,584
1991–92	18,398
1992–93	n/a
1993–94	22,422

n/a - Not available.

The number of deaths due to heart disease is as follows:

	Number
1990	5,047
1991	4,924
1992	5,039
1993	4,997
1994	[1]4,853

[1] Provisional.

Further Education

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what has been the capital expenditure on further education in Northern Ireland in each of the past 10 years in real and constant price terms; [27424]

(2) what has been the capital expenditure on the buildings of the Belfast Institute of Further Education in each of the past 10 years in real and constant price terms. [27425]

Mr. Ancram: Capital expenditure on further education in Norther Ireland and on the further education colleges in the Belfast education and library board area for each financial year from 1984–85 to 1992–93 is in the statements and summary of the education and library boards' accounts—Cmnds 9820, 255, 388, 690, 1105, 1531, 1977, 2249 and 2603—copies of which are available in the Library. The figures for 1993–94 will be published in July 1995. Accounts for 1994–95 have not yet been finalised by the boards.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish the planned capital building programme for the further education sector for the next five years. [27427]

Mr. Ancram: There is no specific allocation of resources to a capital building programme for the further education sector for the next five years. Further education projects compete annually for allocations from the capital new starts programme.

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what reports he has received from inspectors of education about physical conditions in Northern Ireland's institute of further and higher education; and if he will make those reports available. [27428]

Mr. Ancram: Since January 1989, there have been 17 published inspection reports within the further education sector in Northern Ireland. Each of these reports includes comments on the physical conditions of the institution(s) concerned and copies may be obtained from inspectorate support branch, Department of Education (NI), Rathgael house, Balloo road, Bangor, BT19 7RP.

Ormeau Buildings

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the official assessment of the conditions of the Ormeau buildings of the Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education; if they meet basic health and safety requirements; and what he proposes to do about them. [27426]

Mr. Ancram: The general fabric and structure of the original building at Ormeau has deteriorated extensively and part of it has been closed for reasons of safety; the general fabric and construction of the Orlit building and the later extension is in reasonable condition, with the exception of the flat roofing. Measures have been taken by the Belfast education and library board to address the essential health and safety problems.

An economic appraisal to examine the institute's most pressing accommodation needs will be commenced shortly by the board. The target date for the completion of the appraisal is October 1995.

Police (Body Armour)

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to his answer of 25 May, *Official Report*, column 756, if the body armour provided by the RUC is *(a)* bullet-proof and *(b)* knife-proof. [27826]

Sir John Wheeler: The body armour provided is classified as bullet-proof, but, although providing some protection, is not classified as knife-proof.

Education Administration

Mr. Worthington: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what action he proposes to take to ensure that incorporated colleges and schools act co-operatively to provide an integrated service for their communities; [28470]

(2) what plans he has for a Northern Ireland further education funding council or similar body when colleges are incorporated; [28474]

(3) what action he will take to ensure that incorporated colleges make sufficient provision for those with problems of literacy and numeracy; [28469]

(4) what proposals he has for students to be on the managing bodies of incorporated colleges; [28473]

(5) what proposals he has for non-industrialists from the community to be on the managing bodies of incorporated colleges; [28471]

(6) if he will require incorporated colleges to reach set standards in provision for those with special needs; [28468]

(7) what proposals he has for college staff to be on the managing bodies of incorporated bodies. [28472]

Mr. Ancram: The consultation period on the Government's proposals for the restructuring of educational administration in Northern Ireland ended on 9 June. Before making any final decision, I will consider very carefully all the responses which we have received.

Belfast City Council

Rev. Martin Smyth: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the public service offices other than local government offices and the number of persons employed in such offices in Belfast city council in *(a)* January 1992, *(b)* January 1993, *(c)* January 1994 and *(d)* January 1995. [26966]

Sir John Wheeler: The available information has been placed in the Library.

SCOTLAND

Hunting

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland whether all hunts which hunt on Forestry Commission land are required to hold a licence to do so; what monitoring procedures are in place to ensure that the terms and conditions of a licence are adhered to; and for what reasons licences are issued to hunts to hunt on Forestry Commission land. [27124]

Sir Hector Monro: All hunts require permission to enter Forestry Commission land. This permission may be in the form of a licence, or there may be a general permission where there is a long and established tradition of hunting over the land. Forestry Commission staff carry out random checks on hunt days to ensure that licence conditions are being observed. The commission allows hunting over land where it has traditionally been practised or where the right to hunt has been reserved in the commission's title.

Theatres (Funding)

Mr. Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the theatres in Scotland which receive public funding, showing the amount of revenue funding provided by *(a)* the Scottish Arts Council and *(b)* local authorities to each theatre in each of the last five years. [27316]

Sir Hector Monro: The theatres in Scotland which have received public funding from both the Scottish Arts Council and local authorities between 1989 and 1994 are shown in the table. Final figures for 1994–95 are not yet available. Information on theatres supported by local authorities but not by SAC is not held centrally.

	1989–90 £	*1990–91* £	*1991–92* £	*1992–93* £	*1993–94* £
Borderline theatre					
SAC	126,500	139,276	149,025	156,476	156,500
Local authority	35,580	54,799	36,840	68,647	48,050
Brunton theatre					
SAC	35,200	38,755	41,468	53,541	53,541
Local authority	86,580	101,520	117,270	119,440	119,210
Byre theatre					
SAC	71,400	78,611	84,114	103,320	115,430
Local authority	37,950	42,000	46,120	64,574	63,000
Citizens' theatre					
SAC	398,000	438,198	490,272	514,786	535,377
Local authority	457,310	486,365	508,666	550,730	564,575
Communicado theatre					
SAC	—	118,000	126,260	152,573	155,624
Local authority	—	22,500	59,700	27,560	28,111
Dundee Repertory theatre					
SAC	174,000	191,574	215,684	236,486	277,216
Local Authority	178,870	185,000	215,662	274,313	300,348
Perth theatre					
SAC	182,500	200,933	214,988	255,737	260,852
Local authority	222,762	221,500	251,000	246,300	299,771
Pitlochry festival theatre					
SAC	167,500	184,418	197,327	227,193	231,737
Local authority	59,175	63,909	70,300	205,800	76,768
Royal lyceum					
SAC	399,850	440,235	471,051	509.604	534,296
Local authority	328,732	359,000	467,000	456,480	461,509
TAG theatre					
SAC	76,500	84,226	97,778	132,667	136,647
Local authority	201,530	93,467	82,940	97,408	73,700
Traverse theatre					
SAC	227,000	249,927	267,422	280,793	292,024
Local authority	43,000	46,500	55,500	65,374	51,979
Tron theatre					
SAC	125,500	138,175	147,847	190,239	201,653
Local authority	104,000	250,425	123,570	177,325	143,256
Wildcat stage productions					
SAC	142,300	156,672	167,639	184,021	193,222
Local authority	40,000	105,000	44,000	46,000	48,500

	1989–90 £	1990–91 £	1991–92 £	1992–93 £	1993–94 £
7:84 Theatre Company					
SAC	138,000	151,938	162,573	170,702	174,116
Local authority	30,400	28,000	41,400	29,450	38,670

The Scottish Arts Council funding figures relate only to revenue but local authority figures relate both to revenue and project funding as a breakdown is not available.

Community Hospital, Ayrshire

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision he has made in his NHS capital programme for the community hospital in south-east Ayrshire. [27381]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A provisional sum of £4.0 million has been identified within the overall capital programme for Scotland in 1995–96 for the south-east Ayrshire community hospital, with a further £9 million provision in subsequent years. The availability of these monies is dependent on the outcome of Ayrshire and Arran health board's consultation on the siting of the service, submission and approval of a business case for the scheme and full exploration of private finance, which, if successful, will release identified public funds for other uses.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has approved the decision by Ayrshire and Arran health board in respect of which bodies will be allowed to put forward tenders, bids or offers to operate the community hospital in south-east Ayrshire. [27382]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The decision to restrict tenders to operate the new community hospital to NHS providers is entirely a matter for Ayrshire and Arran health board.

Nurses

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total full-time equivalent number of nurses in Scottish hospitals or community posts at the most recent date of which information is available; how many of these are *(a)* employed full time on permanent contracts by NHS trusts, *(b)* employed part time on permanent contracts by NHS trusts, *(c)* employed on short-term contracts by NHS trusts and *(d)* provided to trusts through contracts with private or other non-NHS employers; and what were all these figures one year previously. [27380]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information available centrally is shown in the following table. Permanent and short-term contracts cannot be distinguished. Information is not collected about nurses who may be employed through contracts between trusts and private or other non-NHS employers.

Qualified nurses[1] directly employed by the NHS in Scotland; hospital and community; by type of contract; at 30 September

	Whole-time		Part-time		Total numbers		Whole-time equivalent	
	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994	1993	1994
Total[2,3,4]	25,075	24,849	16,048	16,358	41,123	41,207	34,853.9	34,949.3
Trusts[5]	8,729	21,935	5,622	14,098	14,351	36,033	12,051.1	30,639.8

[1] Comprises senior nurse managers and qualified nurses working in hospital and community. Some senior nurse managers have been transferred on to new A and C senior manager scales and are not included in these figures.
[2] Excludes the following groups of nurses; working for the state hospital, Carstairs, the Common Services Agency or health boards; nurses in training, nurse teachers, agency and bank nurses.
[3] Includes DMUs.
[4] Health boards may purchase health care from the private sector. Nurses employed in the private sector to fulfil such contracts are not included in the data.
[5] There were 17 NHS trusts at 30 September 1993 and 39 at 30 September 1994.

Police Complaints Procedure

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total number of officially investigated complaints against the police in each Scottish region for each of the last five years; what percentage were found to be justified in each case; and how many resulted in *(a)* disciplinary action and *(b)* dismissal in each case. [27378]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is published at table 10 of each annual report by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary for Scotland. The relevant reports—Cm 1993, Cm 2198, Cm 2587 and Cm 2856—are available in the House of Commons Library.

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received over the past year regarding the need for an independent police complaints procedure in Scotland; what consideration he has given to the introduction of such procedure; and if he will make a statement. [27379]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following a review of the existing complaints procedures by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary, published on 11 February 1993, my right hon. Friend concluded that a police complaints authority should not be established in Scotland. He has decided, however, that Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary should make a greater input to the complaints procedure. New arrangements to this end will be introduced as soon as possible under the provisions of the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994.

Very few representations on this matter have been received following the publication of the report of the review.

New Farmers

Sir David Steel: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make provision for compensation to newly established farmers in respect of interest incurred on bank loans as a result of delays in allocating and payment sheep annual premium and suckler cow premium quotas to newly established farmers. [27780]

Mr. Lang *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* There is no provision in the EC legislation governing the respective

schemes which would allow compensation to be paid in such cases.

Accidents at Work

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fatal accident inquiries have been held into fatalities in the workplace in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement. [27310]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Crown Office does not hold records centrally of the number of fatalities in the workplace which were subsequently the subject of a fatal accident inquiry. An inquiry must be held in the case of a death which appears to have resulted from an accident while the person who has died, being an employee, was in the course of his employment or, being an employer or self-employed person, was engaged in his occupation as such, unless criminal proceedings have been concluded against any person in respect of the death or any accident from which the death resulted and the Lord Advocate is satisfied that the circumstances of the death have been sufficiently established in the course of such proceedings. In the past 10 years the Health and Safety Executive has received notification of 298 deaths in the workplace in Scotland.

Prison Accommodation

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* male prisoners and *(b)* female prisoners are currently held (i) three to a one-person cell and (ii) two to a one-person cell; and what the figures were for each of the past seven years. [27309]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Dr. Norman Godman, dated 13 June 1995:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your question about the extent of double and triple occupancy of cells designed for one person.

Occupancy of single cells by more than one prisoner can arise due to factors other than high prisoner numbers, for example to allow refurbishment to improve prisoner accommodation (including the installation of in-cell toilets and electrical power). In some cases single cells are in double occupancy at the request of prisoners themselves, who for their own reasons prefer to share.

Historical records of instances of double or triple occupancy are not maintained, but the current position - as at lock-up on the night of Wednesday 7 June - is set out in the attached table.

Establishment	*Males*	*Females*	*Males*	*Females*
Aberdeen	56	0	0	0
Barlinnie	806	0	0	0
Castle Huntly	0	0	0	0
Cornton Vale	0	18	0	6
Dumfries	12	0	0	0
Dungavel	0	0	0	0
Edinburgh	260	0	87	0
Friarton	50	0	0	0
Glenochil	0	0	0	0
Greenock	176	0	9	0
Inverness	66	0	0	0
Longriggend	0	0	0	0
Low Moss	0	0	0	0
Noranside	0	0	0	0
Penninghame	0	0	0	0
Perth	118	0	0	0
Peterhead	0	0	0	0
Peterhead Unit	0	0	0	0
Polmont	96	0	0	0
Shotts	0	0	0	0
Shotts Special Unit	0	0	0	0
Shotts National Induction Centre	0	0	0	0
Totals	1,640	18	96	6

Police Protective Clothing

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to make funds available to chief constables to ensure that all police officers have ready access to bullet-proof vests and/or knife-proof vests; and if he will make a statement. [27308]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is for police authorities to fund provision of equipment for their forces. The Scottish Office would pay police grant in the usual way at 51 per cent. of expenditure on such provision.

Woodlands

Mr. Tipping: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list by *(a)* parliamentary constituency and *(b)* county or Scottish region all woodlands currently owned by the Forestry Commission, giving their name, location, hectarage and indicating whether they are leasehold or freehold and their market value. [27332]

Sir Hector Monro: Lists of all Forestry Commission woodlands, both by parliamentary constituency and by county or Scottish region, were placed in the Library of the House in 1994. A list of woodlands sold by the commission in 1994 is also held in the Library. These lists give the name, location and size of each woodland.

It is not possible to include the legal status of individual woodlands on the lists because the woodlands often consist of land acquired under several titles, which may be both freehold and leasehold. The commission does not estimate market values for individual woodlands unless they are to be sold.

Radioactivity, Dounreay

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what advice he has received from the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment and the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee about radioactive particles on the beaches near Dounreay nuclear establishment. [26782]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: A joint statement by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment and the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, "Potential Health Effects and Possible Sources of Radioactive Particles Found in the Vicinity of Dounreay Nuclear Establishment", has been published today. A copy of that statement, which is published by HMSO, has been placed in the Library of the House.

The Government are grateful to both committees for their work and look to the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to respond positively to the recommendations made in the statement.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Styling Bars

Mr. Llwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the benefits in terms of the reduction of serious injuries of polyurethane deformable front styling bars for cars; and if he will make a statement. [26580]

Mr. Norris: The digest of the Transport Research Laboratory project report 19 of 1993 indicates that approximately 60 per cent. of pedestrian casualties are struck by the fronts of cars. Softer car fronts could lead to a 7 per cent. reduction in the number of fatally injured pedestrians and could reduce injury severity for 21 per cent. of the seriously injured pedestrians.

Polyurethane deformable bumpers were found to be one method of achieving savings. The Department has not carried out any tests on polyurethane styling bars.

Forth Rail Bridge

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what action he is taking on the latest reports to him from the Health and Safety Commission on the state of the Forth rail bridge. [26618]

Mr. Watts: The Health and Safety Executive has made no reports recently on the condition of the Forth rail bridge. However, the Health and Safety Executive is currently undertaking an assessment of the structural condition of the bridge and hopes to publish its findings later this year.

Taxis

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what consultation he has held with police authority representatives over plans to change the nature of number plates exhibited by taxis and private hire car vehicles. [27952]

Mr. Norris: None.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how he will ensure that radio circuit operators monitor insurance records for taxis and private hire vehicles. [27953]

Mr. Norris: This is one of the matters that will be considered before legislation is introduced in Parliament.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will promote a system of regular driver assessment for taxis and private hire vehicles. [27955]

Mr. Norris: No.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if licensing authorities will have access to all relevant documentation required for the licensing of taxis and private hire vehicles. [27956]

Mr. Norris: Yes, if it can be legally shown to them.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to publish the operation by local authorities of a licensing life scheme, requiring the replacement of taxis after a specified number of years, following his response to the Transport Select Committee's recommendations on taxis and private hire vehicles in the fourth report of Session 1993–94. [27957]

Mr. Norris: None. The criterion should not be the age of the vehicle, but whether it is fit for its intended use.

Rail Fare Reductions

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is his estimate of the annual revenue loss which would result from a 1 per cent. general reduction in United Kingdom rail fares assuming constant ticket demand; and what estimate he has made of the price elasticity of demand for United Kingdom rail travel. [28315]

Mr. Watts: In 1993–94, passenger receipts were £2,165.8 million. In that year, a 1 per cent. reduction in rail fares at a constant level of demand would therefore cost £21.7 million. The Department does not prepare estimates of price elasticity of demand for rail travel.

Newbury Bypass

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to receive the final report on the A34 Newbury bypass from the Highways Agency. [28459]

Mr. Watts: The Highways Agency has been asked to report to the Secretary of State as soon as possible.

Cycle Helmets

Mr. Pawsey: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to introduce legislation to make the wearing of helmets compulsory for pedal cyclists. [28242]

Mr. Norris: The Government actively promote the benefits of cycle helmet wearing, but we have no plans to make them compulsory.

Road Rage

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State if he will initiate a study into the condition known as road rage. [28337]

Mr. Norris: I have no plans to do so at present.

A14

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will examine the dangers of the A14, formerly the A604, road in Cambridgeshire and make plans to improve its safety; and if he will make a statement. [28294]

Mr. Watts: In response to local concerns about the A14 the Highways Agency is appointing consultants to recommend appropriate interim remedial measures that will improve safety until the completion of the major scheme on the A14 between the M11 and the A1.

Drivers' Hours

Mrs. Dunwoody: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has to extend powers to the Vehicle Inspectorate and the police to prohibit domestic registered vehicles from proceeding where it is clear that excess hours are found; and if he will make a statement. [27668]

Mr. Norris: None. The driver of a domestic registered vehicle who is found to have driven excess hours, or taken inadequate rest, is liable to prosecution. In such circumstances, the driver would be advised to take the required rest or face the prospect that refusal to do so would be reported to the court in any subsequent prosecution and further charges might be brought. There is no evidence to suggest that this procedure is an

inadequate means for preventing drivers from continuing their journey.

Helicopter Sites, Central London

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what study he has commissioned or supported concerning the location of additional helicopter sites to serve central London; what conclusions it has reached; and what consultations relating to them he has initiated with the relevant local authorities. [27875]

Mr. Norris: The London heliport study working group was set up in February 1992. Its report was published on 21 March 1995 and copies were placed in the Library of the House.

Any firm planning application for a new heliport, whether in respect of one of the study sites or elsewhere, would first have to be submitted to the appropriate local authority in accordance with the statutory planning procedures.

Vehicle Excise Duty

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the consultations he has held with industry on the changes in vehicle excise duty. [26496]

Mr. Norris: Vehicle excise duty is for the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is not normal practice to consult on taxation rates.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

International Labour Organisation

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which countries have withdrawn from the International Labour Organisation in the last 30 years; and when. [27809]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In the last 30 years the following countries have withdrawn from the International Labour Organisation:

South Africa (1966): rejoined 1994
Lesotho (1971): rejoined 1980
Vietnam (1976 and again in 1985): rejoined 1980 and 1992
United States of America (1977): rejoined 1980

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what notice is necessary before a country withdraws from the International Labour Organisation. [27808]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Under the terms of the constitution of the International Labour Organisation, two years' notice is necessary before a country can formally withdraw from the International Labour Organisation.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the International Labour Organisation programme to eradicate child labour. [27806]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We support the ILO's international programme on the elimination of child labour. The programme helps countries assess and tackle the practical problems they face through advice and direct technical assistance.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth affairs what is his assessment of the work of the International Labour Organisation together with the International Maritime Organisation and the United Kingdom Government in the prevention of maritime accidents leading to loss of life and environmental pollution. [27814]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Maritime safety is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Although the International Maritime Organisation is the United Nations agency in the lead on maritime safety matters, the International Labour Organisation has developed a substantial body of conventions and resolutions addressing various aspects of the employment of seafarers. It has encouraged the international adoption of standards relating, for example, to the accommodation, fitness, catering and other health and safety aspects of working at sea.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he or his colleagues have held with Senator Jesse Helms, chair of the United States Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, about membership of the International Labour Organisation or the other United Nations agencies. [27804]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations he has received from the Confederation of British Industry about United Kingdom participation in the International Labour Organisation. [27812]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: None.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his assessment of the International Labour Organisation's work in building social safety nets in eastern Europe since 1989. [27807]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The International Labour Organisation is one of a number of multilateral and bilateral donors which have been operating in central and eastern Europe since 1989 to help support the transition to democracy and a market economy. It has helped member states to develop new labour market institutions such as employment and training services; to revise and modernise their labour legislation and social security systems and to help the development of independent employers' organisations and trade unions.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the annual costs of sending employer representatives to participate in International Labour Organisation meetings. [27811]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The cost is estimated to be about £18,000.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what follow-up there has been to the paragraphs in the declaration signed by Her Majesty's Government at the United Nations world summit for social development urging ratification and implementation of International Labour Organisation conventions relating to employment rights of minors, women, youth, the disabled and indigenous persons. [27813]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The declaration is a political statement and not a set of minimum standards to be applied universally.

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has

made as to how many United Kingdom nationals would lose their jobs as a result of Britain withdrawing from the International Labour Organisation. [27817]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I have made no such estimate.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the recognition of the Yugoslav province of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a national state by Her Majesty's Government followed in all respects international law and custom; on whose initiative it was so recognised; what was the date of recognition by each of the principle powers; and what regard was had to the views of its religious and racial minorities. [27434]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We and our EC partners recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina on 7 April 1992 following acceptance of the report of the arbitration commission attached to the EC conference on former Yugoslavia. The US Government recognised Bosnia-Herzegovina on the same day and the Russian Government did the same on 28 April 1992. A key factor in the EC's decision was the Bosnian Government's guarantee to respect the rights of minorities.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the population of Sarajevo was Serb before Bosnia-Herzegoina was recognised as a separate state; and how many of them still remain there. [27497]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: According to an official census conducted in April 1991, 27.8 per cent. of the population of Sarajevo was Serb. There are no reliable figures for the current Serb population.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the proportion of humanitarian supplies to Bosnia-Herzegovina which have *(a)* been stolen by the Bosnian Muslim Government to supply its forces and *(b)* reached criminals operating in the black market. [27578]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: There are no reliable figures relating to this issue. We condemn all such acts perpetrated by any side against the UN and other humanitarian relief agencies operating in Bosnia.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of the population of the former Yugoslav province of Bosnia-Herzegovina is effectively represented by the Foreign Minister appointed by the Bosnian Muslim Government. [27498]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We consider Mr. Sacirbey, the new Bosnian Foreign Minister, to represent the legitimate and internationally recognised Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Western Slavonia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when western Slavonia was detached from the rest of Slavonia; and for what reasons it was recognised as part of Croatia. [27579]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The term "Western Slavonia" was given to that part of the region of Slavonia situated within the internationally recognised borders of Croatia which remained in Serb hands at the time of the creation of the United Nations protected areas in November 1991.

Former Yugoslavia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what mandate the European Union and NATO have to intervene in the military situation in the former Yugoslavia except in so far as they are requested to do so by the United Nations. [27575]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: NATO's mandate is to act in support of the UN in former Yugoslavia. The EU has no military role in the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the United Kingdom's contribution to *(a)* the tribunal and *(b)* the office of special prosecutor established by the United Nations in relation to war crimes, etcetera in the former Yugoslavia with particular reference to (i) finance, including voluntary funds, (ii) staff, including secondments from the United Kingdom, (iii) equipment, (iv) forensic assistance, and *(v)* witness protection. [26919]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In 1994 we contributed £20,000 worth of computer and camera equipment and seconded a military lawyer to the prosecutor's office. In May 1995, we seconded four police officers to work for the prosecutor's office as investigators and analysts and will be contributing £200,000 toward these costs. In addition, we have helped the tribunal identify other British citizens to work for the prosecutor's office.

We are currently discussing the question of witness protection with the tribunal.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to assist the tribunal established by the United Nations in relation to the former Yugoslavia in the event that prison sentences are passed by the tribunal. [27921]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: We are currently considering the tribunal's request to offer prison space to those convicted by the tribunal.

Mr. William Powell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what changes in United Kingdom law he expects as a consequence of the establishment of the United Nations special tribunal in relation to the former Yugoslavia; and when he expects such changes to be made. [27920]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Provision is needed to enable the UK to give effect to orders of the tribunal for the transfer of persons and other assistance. The necessary provisions are being drafted and it is hoped that they will be ready in the near future. In the meantime, we are co-operating informally with the prosecutor's office.

Croatia

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the *(a)* legal and *(b)* other grounds on which Her Majesty's Government recognises a territory as a national state; and to what extent these criteria had been met when Her Majesty's Government recognised Croatia as a national state. [27503]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: In recognising a national state, we take into account that a country should have a clearly defined territory with a population, a Government with a

prospect of retaining control and independence in its foreign relations. These criteria are always subject to interpretation in the light of circumstances on the ground. In January 1992 we and our EC partners recognised Croatia on the basis of advice from the arbitration commission that Croatia largely fulfilled the guidelines on recognition adopted in December 1991. These were that the state to be recognised should respect the United Nations charter, guarantee the rights of minorities, respect the inviolability of frontiers except by peaceful agreement, accept commitments on disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, security and regional stability and promise to settle by agreement questions of state succession and regional disputes.

Overseas Domestic Workers

Sir David Knox: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of applications made by foreign visitors to bring their overseas domestic workers with them on visits to the United Kingdom since 9 December 1994 have been turned down at British consulates abroad on the ground that they fail to comply with the new arrangements for the admission of overseas domestic workers announced on that date. [28019]

Mr. Baldry: Comprehensive figures for the number of overseas domestic workers granted entry clearance are not kept. Such figures as are kept cover six-month periods. I will let the hon. Member have the figures for the period 1 January to 30 June 1995 as soon as these are available.

Japan (Former Prisoners of War)

Mr. Nicholls: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have recently been made, formally or informally, to the Government of Japan on compensation payments for British ex-prisoners of war; what representations he expects to make in the foreseeable future; and if he will make a statement. [28076]

Mr. Goodlad: We are precluded on legal grounds from raising the question of compensation formally with the Japanese Government, but Ministers have drawn their attention to the strong feelings which the situation of the former prisoners arouses in the UK. Most recently, I discussed the matter with the Japanese Government during my visit to Japan from 26 to 29 May. We intend to continue these discussions.

Protection of Minorities

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Calder Valley (Sir D. Thompson) of 25 May, *Official Report*, columns *667-68*, if he will detail the technical points that are holding up ratification by the United Kingdom of the Council of Europe's framework convention for the protection of national minorities. [28363]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The timing of the ratification of an international legal instrument is a matter of political judgment. The framework convention was opened for signature very recently, on 1 February 1995. So far, the convention has been signed by 27 member states of the Council of Europe and ratified by one.

The technical points to which I referred in my answer of 25 May remain under consideration.

Ukrainian Prisoners, Bosnia

Mr. Robert N. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Ukrainian soldiers serving with UNPROFOR in Gorazde were taken captive by Bosnian Government forces on 28 May; and what action her Majesty's Government and their North Atlantic Treaty Organisation allies are taking to secure their release. [28371]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Ilford, South (Mr. Gapes) on 12 June 1995, *Official Report*, columns *372-73*.

Tibet

Mr. Menzies Campbell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about his current policy towards Tibet. [28312]

Mr. Goodlad: We regard Tibet as autonomous while recognising the special position of the Chinese authorities there. We are deeply concerned about abuses of human rights and the threat to the cultural and ethnic identity of the Tibetans. We regularly raise these matters with the Chinese authorities.

HOME DEPARTMENT

First Offenders

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convicted offenders in west Yorkshire were sent to prison for a first offence in each year since 1985. [27707]

Mr. Maclean: The information is not held centrally.

Juvenile Offenders

Mrs. Peacock: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many juveniles aged 10 to 16 years were cautioned on more than one occasion during each year since 1985; [27708]

(2) how many juveniles aged 10 to 16 years were *(a)* convicted and *(b)* cautioned in west Yorkshire for each year since 1985. [27709]

Mr. Maclean: The information is not collected routinely. The table shows results from special studies of those cautioned for indictable offences in one week in each of the years 1985, 1988, 1991 and 1994 in England and Wales.

Juveniles aged 10–16 cautioned in study week, 1985, 1988, 1991, and 1994

England and Wales — *Percentages*

Number of previous cautions[1]	*1985*	*1988*	*1991*	*1994*
None	85	81	70	83
One	12	14	18	12
Two or more	3	5	12	5

[1] Not necessarily in the study year.

"Tomorrow's Job"

Mr. Madden: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *136*, if he will place a copy of the publication "Tomorrow's Job" in the Library. [27905]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* I understand that the Crown Prosecution Service is considering whether distribution of this publication may constitute an offence under section 19 of the Public Order Act 1986. I am not prepared at this stage to increase its general circulation by placing a copy in the Library.

Fire Safety

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he intends to implement the proposed Fire Precautions (Places of Work) Regulations 1994, in order to comply with the requirements of EC directives 89/391 and 89/654. [27958]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on 25 May, *Official Report*, column *707*.

Private Security Industry

Mr. Michael: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy to take urgent steps to introduce a statutory scheme of regulation for the private security industry. [27945]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* I am currently looking again at the policies in this area. The Home Affairs Select Committee report on the industry is a timely contribution to the debate on regulation and has some very helpful recommendations. We will respond as soon as possible.

DNA Testing

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) if the DNA analysis undertaken by the Forensic Science Service of tissue samples allegedly taken from a patient who died in Manchester allegedly of AIDS in 1959 indicates that all sets of tissues come from more than one patient; [27818]

(2) what were the results of the DNA analysis undertaken by the Forensic Science Service of tissue samples allegedly taken from a patient who died in Manchester allegedly of AIDS in 1959, which were provided to it by Central Manchester Healthcare NHS trust and Professor David Ho of New York. [27815]

Mr. Maclean: Responsibility for these matters have been delegated to the Director General of the Forensic Science Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Dr. Janet Thompson to Mr. Denis MacShane, dated 13 June 1995:

You recently tabled two Parliamentary Questions about a commission by the Central Manchester Healthcare Trust to conduct DNA tests on tissue samples. As you know, the arrangement now is that the Chief Executive of an Executive Agency, with the agreement of the Minister, replies to Members of Parliament on operational matters. I am therefore replying on behalf of the Forensic Science Service.

I can confirm that the FSS has been commissioned by the Central Manchester Healthcare Trust to undertake DNA tests on tissue samples allegedly taken from a patient who died in Manchester allegedly of AIDS in 1959. This is however a private commission and I am unable therefore to provide any information about the results. You may wish to contact Central Manchester Healthcare Trust direct about this matter.

Closed Circuit Television

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what schemes are available for local authorities to apply for funds to contribute to the establishment of closed circuit television for a town or city centre. [27848]

Mr. Maclean: Local authorities can bid for funds under the single regeneration budget for various purposes, including the establishment of CCTV schemes. The recent CCTV challenge competition has injected £5 million into local CCTV schemes, generating up to £13.8 million in other funding. The possibility of further competitions in the future has not been ruled out, but it is too early to give a firm commitment.

Mr. George: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department which towns and cities have received grants for the establishment of closed circuit television systems in town or city centres in the last five years; and what was the total amount given for each year and to each project. [27847]

Mr. Maclean: The only direct grants made by this department for this purpose were the recent awards to the winners of the CCTV challenge competition, which included many town and city centre schemes. The results of the competition were announced on 27 March. I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Mrs. Roche) on 31 March, *Official Report*, columns *854-56*. Other funding has been made available for such schemes in the past via safer cities projects, through the single regeneration budget, or by police forces or local authorities. Information on the funding of CCTV schemes from these sources is not collected centrally.

Video Shop Retailers (Prosecutions)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prosecutions there have been under the terms of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 of video shop retailers who have hired out or sold material to under-age children; and if he will make a statement. [27772]

Mr. Maclean: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Taunton (Mr. Nicholson) on 21 March, *Official Report*, column *137*.

Mr. David Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what resources are made available to trading standards offices to prevent the dissemination of unclassified videos and to ensure the prosecution of shopkeepers who hire out or sell such videos to under-age children. [27773]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I have been asked to reply.

Resources are made available to local authority trading standards offices, as well as various other local authority services, through the other services block standard spending assessment. As the Government do not allocate these resources to specific services, the amount spent by local authorities on trading standards is a matter for individual authorities.

Voluntary Organisations

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the total amount given by each Government Department to voluntary organisations in the latest year for which figures are available. [27844]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: For 1992–93 I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Dorset, West (Sir J. Spicer) on 13 April 1994, *Official Report*, columns *178-79*. The data for 1993–94 are currently being collated; details will be published as soon as this has been completed.

EDUCATION

Student Finance

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education on what basis student grants and loans are treated as income. [27940]

Mr. Boswell: Student grants and loans are not treated as income for the purposes of the Education (Mandatory Awards) Regulations.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to consider the economic contribution that a student would provide after leaving education when fixing the level of student grants. [27944]

Mr. Boswell: The total resources in grant and loan available to students are a contribution to their living expenses while studying. It is for individual students to consider the likely benefits to them of investing in their own higher education, particularly by utilising the student loan facility.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has for alternative methods for former students to repay their student loans; and what alternatives have been considered by her Department. [27937]

Mr. Boswell: A number of methods of repayment were considered when the loans scheme was being established. The Government continue to keep all aspects of the scheme under review but have no current plans to alter the method of repayment.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what account she takes in the determination of the level of student grants of the level of income support and attached benefits; and what further plans she has in this regard. [27941]

Mr. Boswell: The benefit system, which exists to help those in involuntary difficulty, is not an appropriate means of support for most students. The total resources available to students through grants and loans has been uprated annually since 1990 in line with forecast inflation. The Government monitor student income and expenditure through regular surveys. The next survey will take place in 1995–96.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what proposals she has to increase financial support for students with families. [27938]

Mr. Boswell: Students with dependants are eligible for additional allowances as part of the means-tested mandatory award. The value of these allowances has again been uprated for 1995–96, in line with forecast price increases. Students who are lone parents remain eligible for social security benefits. The access funds can offer additional assistance to students in particular need.

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the present system of student grants in encouraging people into education. [27942]

Mr. Boswell: The present system of student grants and loans introduced in 1990 has been accompanied by increased participation. The number of home full-time undergraduates in Britain increased by over 50 per cent. in the five years between 1987–88 and 1992–93. Some 30 per cent. of young people now enter higher education, compared with only 15 per cent. in 1987. The number of mature home entrants to full-time undergraduates courses also rose by some 125 per cent. between 1987–88 and 1992–93.

Education Vouchers

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what plans she has to pilot a voucher scheme for pre-school provision. [28018]

Mr. Forth: A voucher system is one option under consideration for funding the Prime Minister's commitment to provide, over time, a pre-school place for every four-year-old whose parents wish to take it up. An announcement on the new policy will be made when it has been finalised.

University Staff

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to encourage university staff to spend time in British industry on secondment. [28007]

Mr. Boswell: We support all opportunities that enable academic staff to gain industrial experience. Similarly, we look to industrial personnel to reciprocate wherever possible. Responsibility for developing links with business, of all kinds, rests with individual institutions. Many are conscious of the need to do so, and participate in the range of programmes promoted by the Departments for Employment and of Trade and Industry and the Office for Science and Technology.

Special Needs

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Education (1) what is the average cost of sending a special needs child to *(a)* a mainstream primary school and *(b)* secondary school in Lancashire including the cost of escort; [27439]

(2) what is the average cost of sending a special needs child to a special school in Lancashire. [27538]

Mr. Forth: Lancashire local education authority estimates that for the financial year 1994–95 the average cost of a school place is as follows:

£7,541 at a special school;

£4,830 at a mainstream primary school for a child with a statement of special educational needs;

£4,990 at a mainstream secondary school for a child with a statement of special educational needs.

The cost of transport, including escorts, could not be readily disaggregated since transport and escorts may be shared between pupils attending primary, secondary and special schools and pupils with and without statements of special educational needs.

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Education in what circumstances a child with epilepsy, but with no other circumstance giving rise to concern, may receive a statement of special educational needs under the provisions of the Education Act 1993. [27690]

Mr. Forth: The responsibility for making provision for school children with special educational needs rests with

schools and LEAs. The code of practice on the identification and assessment of special educational needs gives guidance on the exercise of this responsibility.

The majority of children with epilepsy will continue to be educated in ordinary schools and will not need special provision requiring a formal assessment and statement of special educational needs. However, a few children with epilepsy will be subject to a formal assessment and statement because of the severity of their condition.

ENVIRONMENT

Shire County Council Employees

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the number of people excluding teachers employed by each shire county council per thousand population. [27303]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The available information is as follows. The levels of employment in individual authorities are not directly comparable because of variations in, for example, population structure and social characteristics, the extent of the use of private firms and contractors and the level of work undertaken for other authorities and public bodies on an agency basis.

Number of people employed per thousand population in shire counties (excluding teachers) at June 1994
General services (excluding Law and Order)

Authority	*Staff per thousand population*
Avon	9.4
Bedfordshire	n/a
Berkshire	n/a
Buckinghamshire	13.1
Cambridgeshire	n/a
Cheshire	9.0
Cleveland	11.4
Cornwall and Scilly	9.1
Cumbria	8.5
Derbyshire	10.1
Devon	9.6
Dorset	8.9
Durham	10.3
East Sussex	7.9
Essex	6.4
Gloucestershire	7.7
Hampshire	8.8
Hereford and Worcester	n/a
Hertfordshire	9.4
Humberside	n/a
Isle of Wight	8.9
Kent	8.0
Lancashire	n/a
Leicestershire	10.2
Lincolnshire	7.4
Norfolk	9.5
North Yorkshire	n/a
Northamptonshire	n/a
Northumberland	10.7
Nottinghamshire	n/a
Oxfordshire	8.7
Shropshire	9.3
Somerset	11.7
Staffordshire	10.9
Suffolk	11.0
Surrey	7.3
Warwickshire	11.0
West Sussex	9.6
Wiltshire	7.6

n/a = Data not available.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment following the decision of the High Court on 23 May to grant leave to the royal county of Berkshire to review his decision announced on 21 March to abolish the county council, if the time allowed for responses to the draft order issued by his Department on 22 May will be delayed until the ultimate outcome of the judicial review is known. [27850]

Mr. Curry *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* I see no need at present.

Public Events

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the correspondence he has received complaining about the 14-day rule which allows public events to be held on agricultural land for a maximum of 14 days in a year; and what proposals he has to reform the rule. [28170]

Sir Paul Beresford: During the period 1 January 1995 to 31 May 1995, we received eight letters from hon. Members; two from local authorities, one from a police consultative committee, one from a parish council federation and one from a residents' association. The General Permitted Development Order grants a general planning permission for a temporary change of use on land for up to 28 days a year for most activities, but for only 14 days in respect of car boot sales and motor sports. More frequent use requires a planning application. These controls strike a balance between the freedom to use land for any lawful, occasional purpose while protecting amenity. We have no plans to amend them.

Darwin Initiative

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans Her Majesty's Government have to increase the funding of grants for the Darwin initiative and related funds for training ecologists in developing countries. [26330]

Mr. Atkins: Since the inception of the Darwin initiative, funds have been increased from £1 million in 1993–94 to £3 million in the current financial year. So far, £9 million has been allocated for 86 projects in over 50 developing countries, involving around 60 UK institutions and almost a 1,000 developing country participants. Present public expenditure plans allow a continuing rolling programme of £3 million per year.

Biodiversity Convention

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment who is to represent the United Kingdom at the Scientific Advisory Body of Biodiversity convention in Paris in September. [26338]

Mr. Atkins: The UK delegation for the first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on scientific, technical and

technological advice of the biodiversity convention will be led by my Department with appropriate scientific support. I will write to the hon. Gentleman when the composition of the delegation has been decided.

Rented Housing

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his projection of housing new build for rent, in rental units, over the next 10 years. [27960]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: There are no Government projections for housing new build for rent over the next 10 years.

Unfit Housing

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest assessment of homes which require demolition because of disrepair. [27961]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The 1991 English house condition survey found 584,000 dwellings that were unfit due to disrepair. The extent of this disrepair varies considerably and decision as to whether demolition is the most satisfactory course of action is for the local authority concerned in each case.

Household Statistics

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of households currently living in accommodation shared with another household, who require rehousing. [27962]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The 1993–94 an estimated 400,000 households lived in accommodation that was not self-contained. Of these, 200,000 had a strong preference for separate accommodation, 140 would prefer it but not strongly, and 60,000 preferred to share.

The estimates are from the survey of English housing 1993–94 and, like all estimates from household surveys, they are subject to sampling error.

Home Ownership

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the proportion of dwellings in owner occupation for each year since 1990. [27964]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The available figures are shown in table 2.23 of the December 1994 quarterly edition of part 2 of the publication "Housing and Construction Statistics". A copy of this publication is in the Library.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many persons aged 25 years or under became home owners in each year since 1970. [27965]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The available information is set out in the table. It is based on a sample survey of mortgage completions and covers those first-time purchasers aged 25 or under who bought with a building society or Abbey National plc mortgage in the UK in the years 1975 to 1994.

Number of first-time buyers where main borrower is aged 25 or under 1975–1994, UK

	Number
1975	130,900
1976	142,300
1977	139,800
1978	145,200
1979	138,100
1980	136,400
1981	149,900
1982	176,200
1983	181,600
1984	217,700
1985	234,400
1986	242,000
1987	195,700
1988	224,900
1989	173,700
1990	177,700
1991	143,500
1992	104,500
1993	102,800
1994	103,700

Source:
Building Societies Mortgage Survey, a 5 per cent. sample survey of mortgage completions.

Planning Policy

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what research his Department has conducted to support the statement in paragraph 1.6 of planning policy guidance note 7 on protecting and improving the countryside through maintaining a healthy rural economy. [28231]

Sir Paul Beresford: My Department expects to publish research on the implementation of planning policies for diversifying the rural economy later this year.

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the statement in paragraph 1.6 of planning policy guidance note 7 on protecting and improving the countryside through maintaining a healthy rural economy is intended to refer to protecting and improving *(a)* the built environment in rural areas and *(b)* agricultural land and natural habitats. [28232]

Sir Paul Beresford: Paragraph 1.6 refers to the aims of the Government's countryside policies generally. Many factors contribute to a healthy rural economy, including an attractive built environment, an adequate supply of agricultural land and natural habitats. Under the planning system, the guiding principle in the wider countryside is that development should benefit the rural economy and maintain or enhance the environment.

Southwark Council

Ms Harman: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women were employed by Southwark council in each of the last five years. [28350]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: The information is not available centrally.

Species 2000

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans the United Kingdom Government have to participate in Species 2000 and the formulation of a new species list. [26339]

Mr. Atkins: The UK expects to consider initiatives such as species 2000 at the first scientific advisory meeting of the parties to the biodiversity convention in Paris in September, in the context of the provision of scientific technical assessments of the status of biodiversity under article 25 of the convention.

Local Government Residuary Body

Mr. Hawksley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what decision he has reached about the appointment of a chairman for the Local Government Residuary Body (England). [28846]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: I am happy to announce that Mr. Roy Swanston, currently president of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, has accepted the offer of appointment as first chairman of the Local Government Residuary Body (England). The appointment will be made as soon as possible, once the other founder members of the residuary body have been selected.

Thames Gateway

Mr. Ottaway: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he intends to publish the final version of the Thames gateway planning framework. [28847]

Mr. Curry: The planning framework for Thames gateway, RPG9a, which sets out planning guidance for the major regional growth area extending from Newham and Greenwich in London to Thurrock in Essex and Swale in Kent, is being published this week. Copies will be placed in the library at 10.30 am tomorrow.

WALES

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how much local government reorganisation has cost so far; and to what extent that cost has been borne by *(a)* local and *(b)* central government. [27541]

Mr. Redwood *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* There are no figures available centrally for expenditure by local authorities on local government reorganisation. It is up to local government to take advantage of the scope for savings available by bringing and planning, finance and other central administrative services under one control.

I have issued the following funding, which is additional to the local government revenue and capital settlements:

	£
1994–95	
Supplementary credit approvals: IT	790,786
1995–96	
Supplementary credit approvals: IT	19,209,189
Special grant	[1]4,563,252

[1] To 9 June 1995. A total of up to £19.5 million is to be issued under the Special Grant Report (Wales) 1995; of this £17.55 million will be issued in 1995–96.

The expenditure on IT should produce savings in administration and management, if local authorities spend wisely. There will also be capital receipts from sale of assets that are surplus to requirements.

House Condition Survey

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column *254*, if he will set out the year or years in which the houses were assessed for the Welsh house condition survey, published in 1993. [28138]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The physical surveys on which the Welsh house condition survey was based were conducted in 1993. The related opinion surveys were carried out in 1992.

Car Ownership

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of Welsh households own two or more automobiles. [28446]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: According to the 1993 family expenditure survey, 23 per cent. of Welsh households own two or more cars or vans.

Hyperactive Children

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount of grant aid given by his Department to *(a)* the Hyperactive Children's Support Group and *(b)* other voluntary organisations concerned with the treatment of attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder for each of the last five years for which figures are available; and if he will make a statement. [26579]

Mr. Richards: The Welsh Office has not received any applications for grant from the Hyperactive Children's Support Group, nor from any voluntary organisations specifically concerned with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to locate a local landfill site for the disposal of low-level radioactive waste from nuclear sites in the Ynys Môn constituency. [27371]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: None.

Planning Guidance

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what plans he has to publish a strategic guidance for Wales indicating to the newly elected unitary councils strategic guidance on *(a)* nature conservation, *(b)* transport, *(c)* planning and the historic environment, *(d)* planning and pollution control, *(e)* planning and noise and *(f)* aggregate provision and strategic planning; and if he will make a statement. [28195]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: My right hon. Friend will be issuing draft planning policy guidance shortly and minerals policy guidance in due course.

Welsh Health Common Services Authority

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the non-executive directors of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority; and on what date they were appointed. [28303]

Mr. Redwood: The non-executive members are as follows:

Mr. K. C. White, appointed 1 August 1985; recently reappointed until 31 July 1997.

Mrs. E. Elias, appointed 22 May 1995 until 31 March 1997.

Mr. M. Wallace, appointed 1 June 1995 until 31 March 1997.

EstateCare Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy in the Library of the Touche Ross report into the EstateCare Group of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority. [28311]

Mr. Redwood: No. The report is one of a number of working documents which will contribute to my consideration of the future of WHCSA.

Competitive Tendering

Mr. Sweeney: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements for compulsory competitive tendering will apply to county and county borough councils; and if he will make a statement. [28620]

Mr. Redwood: I have been giving very careful consideration to the timetable for reintroducing and extending compulsory competitive tendering after local government reorganisation. The Under-Secretary of State—my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, North (Mr. Jones)—and I have received a number of representations from local authorities and others, in particular about the timetable for reintroducing CCT which was announced in December 1993.

I have concluded that the new councils should be given some more time. Generally, the revised timetable will be as follows:

Reintroduction of CCT under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980: 1 April 1997

Reintroduction of CCT under the Local Government Act 1988: 1 October 1997

CCT will apply to new joint committees which are established by the new councils from 1 October 1997. Where work covered by the 1988 Act will not be greatly affected by the reorganisation, I propose that it should be subject to CCT from 1 April 1997. This will apply to:

Joint committees continued in existence by section 59 of the Local Government (Wales) Act 1994.

The defined activity of catering for purposes of schools and welfare in the case of Powys county council.

The defined activity of collection of refuse in the case of the following councils:

Anglesey county council

Blaenau Gwent county borough council

Bridgend county borough council

Cardiff county council

Cardiganshire county council

Merthyr Tydfil county borough council

Monmouthshire county council

Newport county borough council

Torfaen county borough council

The Vale of Glamorgan county borough council

Wrexham county borough council

I have also been considering the responses to recent consultation exercises on the extension of CCT to personnel, finance and information technology services. I have concluded that I should make no further change to the implementation date for finance of 1 October 1998 and for IT of 1 October 1999. I have decided however that it would be appropriate to take account of the pressures which personnel departments will face as a result of local government reorganisation and the introduction and extension of CCT, and that CCT should apply to personnel services from 1 October 1999.

Finally, I have decided not to make any major changes to the specified minimum and maximum lengths of contract periods which apply in Wales under the 1988 Act. For county and county borough councils the contract periods will be:

	Years
Other cleaning	3–7
Refuse collection	5–7
Sports and leisure management	4–6
All other defined activities	3–5

In the case of building cleaning and ground maintenance, the contract period will be three to four years where the contract includes a significant element of work at a school.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Child Support Agency

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *432*, to the hon. Member for Newham, North-East (Mr. Timms), how the figure for benefit savings achieved by the Child Support Agency was arrived at; and if he will give a detailed breakdown. [27998]

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Miss Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 13 June 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about the benefit savings achieved by the Child Support Agency during the year 1994/1995.

The Agency achieved benefit savings totalling £479.05 million during 1994/95. The table at Annex A shows how the benefit savings for 1994/95 were comprised.

Annex A

Category of benefit savings	*Amount £ million*
Resulting from pre-CSA assessments:	
Paid direct by Absent Parent to Parent With Care	119.52
Paid through Agency collection service to Secretary of State	7.00
Resulting from CSA assessments:	
Paid direct by Absent Parent to Parent With Care	13.76
Paid through Agency collection service to Secretary of State	47.94
Deductions from income support payments made to Absent parents.	2.38
Income Support claim cessation:	
Income support exceeded rate of benefit	23.83
Income support claim withdrawn within 4 weeks of CSA action	199.53
Reductions in Family Credit or Disability Working Allowance resulting from CSA assessments	12.84
Housing benefit/Council Tax reductions resulting from CSA assessments	52.25
Total	479.05

Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he plans to pay industrial injuries benefit direct into the bank of the recipients; and for what reasons this arrangement is not currently available. [27950]

Mr. Hague: The administration of industrial injury disablement benefit is a matter for Mr. Ian Magee, the chief executive of the Benefits Agency. He will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ian Magee to Mr. Anthony Steen, dated 12 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Social Security has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Question about the payment of Industrial Injury Disablement Benefit (IIDB) by Automated Credit Transfer (ACT).

Payment into a bank account by ACT is made on computer produced magnetic tapes. For practical reasons, payment by ACT has been restricted to those benefits which are paid by computer. As IIDB is a clerically administered benefit, an exercise is currently underway to transfer all IIDB payments onto a computer system enabling payments to be made by ACT. This facility is expected to be available by the end of this year.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Poverty

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how he proposes to involve people living in poverty in the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of national strategies and programmes for poverty eradication, as required in article 28a of the action programme agreed at the world summit for social development in Copenhagen in March. [26758]

Mr. Burt: The Department already consults widely with representative non-governmental organisations and other groups on proposed initiatives and policy changes. In addition, Ministers regularly meet with organisations representing vulnerable groups.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he proposes to issue a national poverty eradication plan in compliance with article 26b of the action programme agreed at the world summit for social development in Copenhagen in March. [26757]

Mr. Burt: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave her on 10 May, *Official Report*, column *496*.

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to issue a report on collaboration with European and other Governments on the evaluation of policies to combat poverty in accordance with article 29 of the action programme agreed at the world summit for social development. [26756]

Mr. Burt: There is no requirement in paragraph 29 of the programme of action to issue such a formal report and we have no plans to do so.

There is regular discussion and evaluation of social policies in a variety of international forums in which the UK participates.

Social Security Expenditure

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will make a statement on the basis for his estimate of a £4 billion reduction in the forecast for social security expenditure by 2001 which will occur in addition to the £4 billion reduction due to policy changes he has initiated. [27223]

Mr. Hague: All projections for 2000–01 were made on the same basis as the projection published in "The Growth of Social Security" 1993.

The total reduction in forecast expenditure projected for 2000–01 is £7.8 billion. Of this, £4 billion is due to policy changes. Approximately £2.1 billion of the difference is due to the use of a lower unemployment assumption than that used in "The Growth of Social Security" reflecting the reduction in unemployment which has already occurred.

The remaining £1.7 billion is the net effect of a wide range of forecasting changes due partly to the use of more up-to-date information on trends in benefit case loads and expenditure and the use of improved forecasting techniques.

Note:

All figures are in 1994–95 prices.

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will estiamte what it will cost each working person per day to finance social security expenditure by 2000–01. [27219]

Mr. Hague: Total social security benefit expenditure in 2000–01 is estimated at £98.1 billion in 1994–95 prices, including administrative costs at 1994–95 levels. This is approximately equivalent to £16 per working day on the basis of the current working population.

Back to Work Bonus

Mr. Nigel Evans: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to include a back to work bonus in his reforms of the unemployment benefits. [27571]

Mr. Roger Evans: We intend to introduce a back to work bonus scheme in October 1996 in jobseeker's allowance and income support as part of our plans to improve work incentives for unemployed people. Claimants who undertake small amounts of work while on benefit will be able to build up a lump sum bonus of up to £1,000 which they can claim when they leave benefit to take up work.

National Insurance

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the additional annual revenue which would have been raised in 1995–96 if the upper earnings limit for employee national insurance contributions have been indexed to wages rather than prices. [28194]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The upper earnings limit for national insurance contributions is statutorily linked to the rate of the basic retirement pension and has been set at £440 for 1995–96. If the increase in the upper earnings limit for 1995–96 over 1994–95 has been based on the general increase in earnings instead of prices in the year ending September 1994, the limit is likely to have been rounded to £445. The additional revenue which would have been raised by such an increase is estimated as £48 million in the first year.

Source: Government Actuary's Department.

Note: The reply assumes that the lower earnings limit continue to be based on the increase in prices, thus broadening the contributions base.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the *(a)* likely cost and *(b)* maximum cost of exempting employers for a period of one year from paying national insurance contributions for employees directly employed after having been unemployed for one year or more. [28316]

Mr. Arbuthnot: The estimated cost could be as much as £200 million per annum. Allowing for less than full take-up of the exemption, the cost is likely to be in the region of £150 million.

These estimates do not allow for any possible changes in behaviour.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his estimate of the employment effect of reducing employers' national insurance contributions by *(a)* 1 per cent., *(b)* 2 per cent. and *(c)* 3 per cent. [28314]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Any reduction in employers' national insurance contributions would cut employers' non-wage costs and could be expected to provide an increase in employment opportunities. However, it is not possible to assess the differential effect of a range of contribution reductions.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Southern Africa

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the value by category of channel of British humanitarian and emergency relief through both bilateral and multilateral channels to each of the member states of the Southern African Development Community for each year since 1979 in both cash and constant prices. [26950]

Mr. Baldry: The information requested is available only for the years 1986–87 to 1993–94. Tables have been placed in the Library.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total European Union aid *(a)* to the institution of the Southern African Development Community and its predecessor the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference and *(b)* to individual member states of the Southern African Development Community for each year since 1979 in both cash and constant prices; what are the projections for future years; and what has been the United Kingdom's contribution. [26949]

Mr. Baldry: EC net official development assistance to individual members of the Southern African Development Community from 1979 to 1993, the last year for which figures are available, is set out in tables A and B. South Africa joined the SADC in 1994. Information on EC aid to institutions of the SADC is not available.

Projections of future levels of aid are not available.

The primary source of EC aid to SADC states has been successive European development funds. The UK contribution to each EDF is set out in table C.

Table A: Net official development assistance from the EC to SADC countries in cash prices (£ million), 1979–93

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Angola	0.3	0.4	1.6	0.9	1.6	6.5	5.6	6.7	5.1	12.0	12.0	30.3	32.2	34.6	30.4
Botswana	2.3	2.5	3.4	1.0	1.4	5.1	2.2	4.9	3.1	4.9	5.6	4.7	4.1	2.7	12.7
Lesotho	1.2	2.0	3.4	3.8	3.6	5.6	5.8	4.2	4.5	7.8	7.4	8.0	5.7	11.3	11.7
Malawi	6.0	8.9	6.9	6.2	3.8	10.9	8.4	11.7	16.7	21.6	26.4	25.4	24.6	31.9	30.0
Mozambique	2.5	3.0	5.2	2.3	9.8	16.0	19.6	22.7	15.7	37.5	54.7	45.8	58.4	51.0	55.2
Namibia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.2	39.3	42.4	15.6	7.9
Swaziland	4.9	3.3	1.3	1.1	3.0	4.6	1.5	1.6	2.9	2.8	4.9	4.8	4.4	4.7	3.2
Tanzania	13.8	10.8	20.0	17.1	17.9	23.9	23.1	25.5	20.1	19.5	31.4	23.6	23.1	63.5	46.3
Zambia	4.9	8.7	13.6	17.2	5.5	17.9	22.4	11.1	12.1	19.4	20.7	14.6	17.7	54.1	95.7
Zimbabwe	—	4.2	1.7	5.8	6.9	19.4	3.0	2.7	4.2	8.9	11.9	6.9	6.5	12.8	34.0
SADC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	35.9	43.8	57.1	55.5	53.6	109.9	91.6	91.1	84.3	134.4	177.2	203.4	219.1	282.3	372.0

Source:
OECD DAC Publications.

Table B: Net official development assistance from the EC to SADC countries in constant 1993 prices (£ million), 1979–93

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Angola	0.7	0.8	3.0	1.6	2.6	10.3	8.4	9.7	7.0	15.6	14.6	34.1	33.9	34.9	30.4
Botswana	5.7	5.2	6.4	1.7	2.3	8.1	3.3	7.1	4.3	6.4	6.8	5.3	4.3	2.7	12.7
Lesotho	3.0	4.2	6.4	6.6	6.0	8.9	8.7	6.1	6.2	10.1	9.0	9.0	6.0	11.4	11.7
Malawi	15.0	18.6	12.9	10.8	6.3	17.2	12.6	16.9	23.0	28.1	32.0	28.6	25.9	32.2	30.0
Mozambique	6.2	6.3	9.7	4.0	16.2	25.3	29.3	32.9	21.7	48.8	66.4	51.6	61.5	51.5	55.2
Namibia	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2.7	44.3	44.7	15.7	7.9
Swaziland	12.2	6.9	2.4	1.9	5.0	7.3	2.2	2.3	4.0	3.6	5.9	5.4	4.6	4.7	3.2
Tanzania	34.4	22.5	37.4	29.8	29.6	37.8	34.5	36.9	27.7	25.4	38.1	26.6	24.3	64.1	46.3
Zambia	12.2	18.2	25.5	29.9	9.1	28.3	33.5	16.1	16.7	25.2	25.1	16.4	18.6	54.6	95.7
Zimbabwe	—	8.8	3.2	10.1	11.4	30.7	4.5	3.9	5.8	11.6	14.4	7.8	6.8	12.9	34.0
SADC	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	89.4	91.5	106.9	96.4	88.5	173.9	137.0	131.9	116.4	174.8	215.0	229.1	230.6	284.7	327.1

Source:
OECD DAC Publications.

Table C: European development funds: United Kingdom shares

	Dates over which committed	*UK share Per cent.*
IV	1975–80	18.7
V	1981–85	18.0
VI	1986–90	16.58
VII	1991–95	16.37

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the Government bilateral related aid *(a)* to the institution of the Southern African Development Community and its predecessor the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference and *(b)* to the individual member states of the Southern African Development Co-ordination for each year form 1979 to 1994 in cash and constant prices; and what is the projection for future years. [26948]

Mr. Baldry: Following is a table which indicates levels of bilateral aid given both to SADC as an institution and to the member states of SADC between 1979 and 1993–94. South Africa has also been included even though that country only became a member of SADC very recently.

Projections of future levels of aid are not available. However, the FCO departmental report for 1995, Cm 2802, page 61, contains a table which outlines the expected levels of bilateral aid expenditure on a regional basis.

Total bilateral aid to SADC countries at current prices 1979–87

£000

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Angola	43	12	93	55	71	146	164	317	261
Botswana	7,404	11,546	10,199	7,570	13,289	15,975	8,744	12,301	12,190
Lesotho	6,569	4,607	6,364	4,251	4,695	5,233	2,382	3,784	3,942
Malawi	23,314	16,543	15,999	16,984	14,620	12,959	22,173	15,346	24,865
Mozambique	6,369	4,629	5,379	1,924	1,805	4,182	8,366	7,424	23,836
Namibia	161	168	163	220	279	313	605	733	969
South Africa	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	691	772	1,577
Swaziland	8,351	6,472	4,144	6,366	5,665	5,626	3,469	6,402	3,514
Tanzania	23,559	32,119	30,040	27,328	30,384	33,033	17,967	12,715	28,789
Zambia	29,159	20,696	24,119	14,237	15,485	32,901	25,552	35,378	25,349
Zimbabwe	5,070	36,405	50,048	21,464	19,453	15,062	23,636	12,503	12,498
SADC[1]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	109,999	133,197	146,548	100,399	105,746	125,430	113,749	107,675	137,790

[1] Figures for SADC are only available from 1988–89.

Total bilateral aid to SADC countries at current prices 1987–88 to 1993–94

£000

	1987–88	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Angola	471	1,140	731	1,530	2,484	1,874	13,586
Botswana	7,978	7,606	8,247	7,487	11,605	7,457	8,413
Lesotho	3,937	5,348	5,505	5,856	6,453	27,194	6,070
Malawi	36,514	41,157	48,197	43,280	26,153	27,328	26,256
Mozambique	20,747	34,834	20,839	26,171	18,337	34,141	34,704
Namibia	1,421	1,633	2,058	1,711	2,359	4,493	3,894
South Africa	3,159	4,991	6,010	8,094	9,324	11,709	14,291
Swaziland	3,123	6,689	4,266	5,255	3,499	4,189	8,196
Tanzania	33,617	31,956	20,146	41,578	32,454	62,370	31,491
Zambia	17,807	15,285	18,279	49,790	34,425	47,974	47,623
Zimbabwe	16,090	23,375	21,956	33,608	47,688	44,267	39,824
SADC[1]	n/a	3,420	4,256	7,525	9,101	6,001	4,420
Total	144,864	177,434	160,490	231,885	203,882	278,997	238,768

[1] Figures for SADC are only available from 1998–89.

Total bilateral aid to SADC countries at constant[1] prices 1979–87

£000

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*
Angola	107	25	174	96	117	231	245	459	360
Botswana	18,460	24,088	19,095	13,172	21,972	25,253	13,077	17,814	16,819
Lesotho	16,378	9,611	11,915	7,397	7,763	8,272	3,562	5,480	5,439
Malawi	58,128	34,513	29,955	29,553	24,173	20,485	33,161	22,224	34,307
Mozambique	15,880	9,657	10,071	3,348	2,984	6,611	12,512	10,751	32,887
Namibia	401	350	305	383	461	495	905	1,062	1,337
South Africa	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1,033	1,004	2,176

Total bilateral aid to SADC countries at constant[1] prices 1979–87

£000

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987
Swaziland	20,821	13,502	7,759	11,077	9,367	8,893	5,188	9,271	4,848
Tanzania	58,739	67,008	56,243	47,552	50,237	52,217	26,871	18,414	39,721
Zambia	72,701	43,177	45,157	24,773	25,603	52,008	38,214	51,234	34,975
Zimbabwe	12,641	75,950	93,704	37,348	32,164	23,809	35,349	18,107	17,244
SADC[2]	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	274,256	277,881	274,378	174,699	174,841	198,274	170,117	155,820	190,113

Notes:
[1] Calendar years in 1993 prices. Financial years in 1993–94 prices.
[2] Figures for SADC are only available from 1988–89.
Source:
British Aid Statistics—published by financial year from 1992.

Total bilateral aid to SADC countries at constant[1] prices 1987–88 to 1993–94

£000

	1987–88	1988–89	1989–90	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94
Angola	661	1,500	899	1,743	2,662	1,931	13,586
Botswana	11,203	10,011	10,146	8,528	12,436	7,685	8,413
Lesotho	5,528	7,039	6,772	6,670	6,915	28,026	6,070
Malawi	51,274	54,170	59,294	49,295	28,027	28,164	26,256
Mozambique	29,134	45,847	25,637	29,808	19,651	35,186	34,704
Namibia	1,995	2,149	2,532	1,949	2,528	4,630	3,894
South Africa	4,436	6,569	7,394	9,219	9,992	12,067	14,291
Swaziland	4,385	8,804	5,248	5,985	3,750	4,317	8,196
Tanzania	47,206	42,060	24,784	47,356	34,779	64,278	31,491
Zambia	25,005	20,118	22,488	56,710	36,891	49,442	47,623
Zimbabwe	22,594	30,765	27,011	38,279	51,104	45,622	39,824
SADC[2]	n/a	4,501	5,236	8,571	9,753	6,185	4,420
Total	203,421	233,560	197,801	264,113	218,488	287,533	238,768

Notes:
[1] Calendar years in 1993 prices. Financial years in 1993–94 prices.
[2] Figures for SADC are only available from 1988–89.
Source:
British Aid Statistics—published by financial year from 1992.

ACP States

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total European Union aid to the African, Caribbean and Pacific states for each year since 1979 in cash and constant prices; what projected aid is planned; and what has been the United Kingdom's contributions. [26953]

Mr. Baldry: EC net official development assistance to African, Caribbean and Pacific states from 1979 to 1993, the last year for which figures are available, is set out in table A.

Projections of future levels of aid are not available.

The primary source of EC aid to ACP states has been successive European development funds. The UK contribution to each EDF is set out in table B.

Table A: Net official development assistance from the EC to ACP states, 1979–93

£ million

	Current prices	Constant 1993 prices
1979	335.9	837.6
1980	311.1	649.0
1981	447.1	837.2
1982	398.2	692.9
1983	467.5	773.0
1984	588.8	930.7
1985	726.4	1,086.3
1986	733.8	1,062.6
1987	746.8	1,030.3
1988	1,001.6	1,303.2
1989	1,074.2	1,303.8
1990	1,001.9	1,128.1
1991	1,195.7	1,259.2
1992	1,536.2	1,550.8
1993	1,442.6	1,442.6

Source:
OECD DAC Publications.

Table B: European development funds: UK shares

	Dates over which committed	UK share Per cent.
IV	1975–80	18.7
V	1981–85	18.0
VI	1986–90	16.58
VII	1991–95	16.37

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the United Kingdom Government total bilateral aid to the African, Caribbean and Pacific states for each year since 1979 in both cash and constant prices; and what future projected aid is planned. [26951]

Mr. Baldry: Total United Kingdom Government bilateral aid for the period 1979 to 1993–94 is set out. Projections of future level of aid are not available.

Total UK bilateral Gross Public Expenditure[1] to ACP states, 1979 to 1993—94[2]

£ million

	Current prices	*Constant 1993–94[3] prices*
1979	278.1	693.4
1980	317.1	661.5
1981	366.4	686.0
1982	311.2	541.5
1983	292.9	484.3
1984	328.5	519.3
1985	371.2	555.1
1986	339.6	491.8
1987	374.3	516.4
1987–88	422.1	592.7
1988–89	485.0	638.3
1989–90	582.4	716.5
1990–91	636.7	725.2
1991–92	525.0	562.6
1992–93	618.6	637.5
1993–94	531.1	531.1

Source:

British Aid Statistics 1994 Edition.

Notes:

[1] Gross Public Expenditure on aid is expenditure by all official UK sources i.e. Government Departments and public bodies such as the Commonwealth Development Corporation.

[2] For years up to 1987 information is available on a calendar year basis only. For subsequent years information is available only on a financial year basis.

[3] Calendar year figures are in 1993 prices while financial year figures are in 1993–94 prices.

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the total British humanitarian and emergency relief through both bilateral and multilateral channels in cash and constant prices to the African, Caribbean and Pacific states for each year since 1979; and what humanitarian aid is planned for future years. [26952]

Mr. Baldry: British bilateral emergency aid includes that part of emergency aid channelled through multilateral agencies for which the British Government can identify the specific recipient country in advance. The allocation of other multilateral emergency aid to individual countries is not available.

The following table gives total British bilateral emergency aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific countries for the years 1987–88 to 1993–94. This is the only period for which it is possible to provide this information for these countries on a consistent basis. It is not our practice to publish estimates of expenditures on emergency relief which, by its very nature, is unpredictable.

British bilateral emergency aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries 1987–88 to 1993–94

£ million

	British bilateral emergency aid	*Bilateral emergency aid at 1993–94 prices*
1987–88	36.1	50.7
1988–89	45.5	59.9
1989–90	31.5	38.8
1990–91	44.7	50.9
1991–92	58.8	63.0
1992–93	83.8	86.4
1993–94	86.1	86.1

Multilateral Aid (Export Benefits)

Miss Lestor: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what value in export benefit to British manufacturers arises from each pound contributed in multilateral aid in each year since 1979. [26868]

Mr. Baldry: Data on sources of procurement by the multilateral agencies are subject to various qualifications. The quality and coverage varies from agency to agency; there are considerable fluctuations from year to year in procurement from single countries and the data made available to donors are often late. 1982 is the earliest year for which the comprehensive data are available.

There is no direct link between donor contributions and procurement, but we estimate that over the 10 years between 1982 and 1991 the agencies procured about £1.20 of UK goods and services for every £1 contributed by the UK to the agencies. Estimates for individual years are unreliable.

We are currently compiling estimates from the data provided for 1992 and 1993 and will provide data shortly.

Social Development Summit

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs for what reasons Her Majesty's Government did not support the Copenhagen social summit proposal tabled by the UN Development Programme in respect of a levy on international currency transfers; and if he will make a statement. [27392]

Mr. Baldry: We support the summit's conclusion that this type of taxation should not be promoted as a way of assisting developing countries. There are huge practical difficulties in the application of such a tax and it would distort international financial transactions.

The best way to help poorer countries develop is to allow them to participate fully in international commerce. This is why my right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development made it clear in her address to the summit that full implementation of the general agreement on tariffs and trade is more likely to generate increased jobs worldwide than any other single international development.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on what grounds Her Majesty's Government did not support the Copenhagen social summit proposal tabled by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund and the United Nations Development Programme in respect of the 20:20 initiative; and if he will make a statement. [27400]

Mr. Baldry: We worked with our international partners to agree an acceptable formula for the world summit for social development declaration. We support the Copenhagen declaration and programme of action including the section which refers to the 20:20 initiative.

China (Family Planning)

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) if he will place in the Library the information provided by the International Planned Parenthood Federation to his Department on the activities of the Chinese Family Planning Association; [27296]

(2) what information he has on the amounts donated to China from the core funds of the United Nations Population Fund—UNFPA—and the International Planned Parenthood Federation for each of the last 16 available years; [27238]

(3) what facilities or arrangements exist for Parliament to monitor the expenditure of funds by the International Planned Parenthood Federation and—UNFPA granted by Her Majesty's Government to the core funds of the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the UNFPA; [27295]

(4) if he will list the results of his policy of funding the Chinese population control programme via the core funds of the UNFPA and the International Planned Parenthood Federation; and if he will make a statement; [27241]

(5) what is his estimate of the number of ultra-sound machines now operating in China; what assistance has been given by the UNFPA, IPPF and the Chinese Family Planning Association in respect of supplying, operating or training operators of such machines; and what information he has on the purposes to which such machines are being put. [27233]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answers 8 June 1995]:* My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member and copies of the letter will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Mr. Alton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (1) what information he has on the situation in the villages of Feng Jia Zhuang and Long Tian Gou in Hebei province, following the Chinese Government's push to enforce population control laws there; and what representations Her Majesty's ambassador to China has made regarding the situation in these villages; [27227]

(2) what information he has on the situation of Chinese Roman Catholics who conscientiously object to Chinese population control policies; and what assurance he has received from the Chinese Government that conscientious objection will be respected; [27228]

(3) if his Department has obtained a copy of the law of the People's Republic of China on maternal and infant health care adopted in October 1994; and if he will raise the law at the United Nations as liable to breach the United Nations guaranteed human rights to found a family freely and decide the number and spacing of children; [27229]

(4) what information he has on eugenic practices in China's population control policy; and if he will make a statement; [27230]

(5) what information he has on the Chinese Government's announcement in February 1995 of tougher goals for population growth rates and the measures to be taken to achieve such goals; and if he will make a statement; [27231]

(6) what information he has on Chinese Government proposals to offer incentives to those complying with population control legislation and to reward local officials who successfully lower regional birth rates; and if he will make a statement; [27232]

(7) what information he has on the reasons for the disproportionate proportion of boys born in China compared with the world's natural birth ratio; and if he will make a statement; [27234]

(8) if he will make a statement on the special report in the April edition of the "Catholic World Report" on the new eugenics law and population control programme in China, a copy of which has been sent to him. [27237]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answers 8 June 1995]:* My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Overseas Development will write to the hon. Member, and copies of the letter will be placed in the Libraries of the House.

Desertification

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the Government's schedule for ratification of the desertification convention; and what additional resources will be committed to it. [28014]

Mr. Baldry: We have no specific schedule. We intend to ratify concurrently with other EU and OECD countries. The level of resources committed will depend significantly on the priority given by our developing country partners to projects to combat desertification, in relation to their other proposals for funding from our aid programme.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report,* column *58,* what satellite remote sensing technology has now been, or will be, supplied to the Indonesian Ministry of Forestry under *(a)* the bilateral aid programme and *(b)* commercial arrangements; what is the precise nature of the technology; and which British companies are involved. [28186]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* Under the tropical forestry management programme we have supplied the Ministry of Forestry with a local application of remote sensing techniques—LARST—system to receive and process up-to-the-minute information from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration satellite and Meteosat which are used to monitor the incidence of forest fires in Kalimantan. The project has also supplied NASA satellite imagery for forest and land use mapping purposes.

LARST is a personal computer—based system developed by the Natural Resources Institute at Chatham, in co-operation with the universities of Bradford, Reading and Cranfield, and the Meteorological Office, under an ODA research grant.

LARST is low cost, simple and robust, and has many applications: drought and famine early warning, vegetation and pest monitoring, animal tracking, weather forecasting and aquatic resource management.

As to the precise nature of the technology provided under the aid and trade provision, I refer my hon. Friend to my answer of 6 June 1995, *Official Report*, column *58*. The seminar was arranged by Technology Applied Systems Ltd.—using a team which included representatives from the British National Space Centre, Farnborough, the universities of Dundee, Nottingham and North Wales, the Natural Resources Institute, Technology Applied Systems Ltd., Hunting Technical Services and Gems of Cambridge.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *584*, if he will give the exact date on which full and formal appraisal documents were submitted by the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of the aid and trade provision support for the AIS submarine cable project; and by whom the appraisals were undertaken. [28189]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The Department of Trade and Industry's appraisal document was completed in March 1984 and that of the Overseas Development Administration in June 1984. Each appraisal was conducted by officials of the relevant department. The ODA obtained additional advice from technical staff of the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, columns *56–57*, what specific equipment was supplied under the Bali and Medan airport security project; and who the Government engaged to carry out the associated training programme. [28183]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The equipment supplied under the Bali and Medan airport security systems project was as follows:

External Items
CCTV Cameras
Lifting Boom type gates
Hand-held radios
Mobile X-Ray units
Portable X-Ray units
Microphonic fence detection systems
Microwave transceivers

Internal Items
CCTV Cameras
Hand baggage X-Ray units
Hold baggage X-Ray units
Hand-held metal detectors
Hand-held explosives vapour detectors
Archway metal detectors (Passenger gateways)
Passive infra-red detectors
Access control system
Guard tour points

Associated Items
Cables—mains power, coaxial video, fibre optic, data
Video recorders
Central control console
Camera control system
Alarm monitor computer
Tools and test equipment
Uninterrupted power supplies
Spares
Training was carried out at the college of the UK supplier.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *584*, if he will give the exact date on which full and formal appraisal documents were submitted by the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of the aid and trade provision support for the Bukit Asam rail bridges project; and by whom the appraisals were undertaken. [28187]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The Department of Trade and Industry's appraisal was completed in August 1984 and that of the Overseas Development Administration during October 1984. The appraisals were undertaken by officials of the departments, with assistance from technical staff of the Crown Agents for Overseas Governments and Administrations.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *584*, if he will give the exact date on which full and formal appraisal documents were submitted by the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of the aid and trade provision support for the isolated diesels project; and by whom the appraisals were undertaken. [28188]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The appraisal documents for this project were submitted by both Departments in August 1982. The appraisals were conducted by the relevant officials in each Department.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *584*, if he will give the exact date on which full and formal appraisal documents were submitted by the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of the aid and trade provision support for the Mrica hydro project; and by whom the appraisals were undertaken. [28190]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The Department of Trade and Industry's appraisal document was completed in September 1981 and that of the Overseas Development Administration in January 1982. Each appraisal was conducted by officials of the relevant department.

Coconut Shells (Fuel)

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what aid he gives to schemes designed to substitute empty shells of coconut and other palm, fast-growing trees and other materials for mangrove, as fuel in coastal areas of developing countries. [26332]

Mr. Baldry: Research carried out by the Natural Resources Institute into the use of coconut shells as fuel, based on carbonisation with waste heat recovery, helped to develop technologies which are being used commercially in Indonesia and Sri Lanka. In addition, the

Overseas Development Administration continues to fund research into fast-growing tree species, to provide fuel and other products, through its forestry research programme managed by the Oxford Forestry Institute.

We have helped several developing countries in Asia and central America to carry out tree inventories of coastal zones, including mangrove forests. Most recently, the ODA has offered United Kingdom expertise to South Africa to help prepare strategies for managing its coast line and hopes to agree a coastal zone project shortly in Ghana.

St. Helena

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of state for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help is being given to St. Helena to restore unique and rare ecology. [26333]

Mr. Baldry: In 1993 the ODA funded a visit to St. Helena by a consultancy team led by the royal botanic gardens, Kew, which prepared a report containing proposals for a sustainable environment and development strategy on the island. Following their consideration of the report, the St. Helena Government made a number of further requests for assistance from the United Kingdom. As a result three consultancies, each dealing with discrete areas of environmental or conservation concern, have taken place. One report, on the rehabilitation of Crown wastelands, has been forwarded to the St. Helena Government for comment. Two further reports, dealing with an endemic plants rescue programme and organic waste composting technology, are awaited.

The ODA also supports the agriculture and forestry department of the St. Helena Government as the body responsible for environmental conservation on St. Helena, through provision of three technical co-operation staff and substantial grant-in-aid contributions to facilitate the Department's on-going habitat restoration work.

Multilateral Aid

Mr. Robert Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what has been the value of the United Kingdom's contribution, in cash and constant prices, to multilateral aid programmes for each year since 1979 by category of institution; what are the projections for future years; and if he will provide a breakdown of the United Kingdom's contribution to specific programmes of international institutions. [26947]

Mr. Baldry: The information requested, by major categories of multilateral spending, is contained in the tables. Detailed information on UK contributions to individual institutions is published in "British Aid Statistics", copies of which are in the Libraries of the House.

Multilateral contributions in cash terms 1979 to 1997–98

£ million

	EC budget (CEE/FSU share in brackets)	EDF	WB/IMF	Other MDBs (EBRD share in brackets)	UN	Other multilateral	Total
1979	45	73	44	14	69	12	257
1980	58	62	73	14	48	8	264
1981	102	56	116	15	49	10	346
1982	103	71	154	14	58	12	411
1983	114	75	205	15	57	14	481
1984	150	76	197	29	66	14	531
1985	164	70	128	34	84	14	494
1986	144	79	154	36	81	16	510
1987	128	94	157	30	100	13	523
1987–88	128	100	159	33	88	17	525
1988–89	154	131	201	30	78	16	613
1989–90	163	142	201	30	80	18	633
1990–91	188(5)	146	160	32	102	18	646
1991–92	255(30)	200	230	69(35)	120	18	892
1992–93	285(59)	192	260	92(54)	132	20	981
1993–94	350(93)	172	246	76(46)	136	18	997
1994–95[1]	333(91)	238	315	90(40)	67	27	1,070
1995–96[2]	480(195)	247	248	97(40)	55	19	1,146
1996–97[2]	560(240)	267	232	107(40)	62	17	1,245
1997–98[2]	629(264)	300	209	113(40)	59	16	1,326

Notes:

[1] Estimate.

[2] Figures taken from 1995 Departmental Report (Cm 2862).

Outturn data are from British Aid Statistics, which has been published on a financial year basis from 1992.

For the constant price series, calendar year figures are in 1993 prices; financial year figures are in 1993–94 prices.

EDF = European Development Fund.

WB/IMF = World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund.

Other MDBs = Regional development banks (African, Asian, Inter-American and Caribbean) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Other multilateral = Commonwealth programmes plus international research organisations.

CEE/FSU = Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union.

Multilateral contributions 1979 to 1993–94 in constant prices

£ million

	EC budget (CEE/FSU share in brackets)	EDF	WB/IMF	Other MDBs (EBRD Share in brackets)	UN	Other multilateral	Total
1979	112	182	110	35	172	30	641
1980	121	129	152	29	100	17	548
1981	191	105	217	28	92	19	652
1982	179	124	268	24	101	21	717
1983	188	124	339	25	94	23	793
1984	237	120	311	46	104	22	840
1985	245	105	191	51	126	21	739
1986	209	114	223	52	117	23	738
1987	177	130	217	41	138	18	721
1987–88	180	140	223	46	124	24	737
1988–89	203	172	265	39	103	21	803
1989–90	201	175	247	37	98	22	780
1990–91	214(6)	166	182	36	116	21	735
1991–92	273(32)	214	246	74(38)	129	19	955
1992–93	294(61)	198	268	95(56)	136	21	1,012
1993–94	350(93)	172	246	76(46)	136	18	998

Notes:

Outturn data are from British Aid Statistics, which has been published on a financial year basis from 1992.

For the constant price series, calendar year figures are in 1993 prices; financial year figures are in 1993–94 prices.

EDF = European Development Fund.

WB/IMF = World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund.

Other MDBs = Regional development banks (African, Asian, Inter-American and Caribbean) and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

Other multilateral = Commonwealth programmes plus international research organisations.

CEE/FSU = Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union.

Cameroon

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help he gives to schemes for eco-tourism in Cameroon. [26334]

Mr. Baldry: We are not directly assisting eco-tourism in Cameroon. However, ODA-supported forestry/biodiversity projects at Mount Cameroon and the Korup national park are attracting small numbers of eco-tourists.

Madagascar

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help he gives to promoting the needs of biodiversity in Madagascar. [26336]

Mr. Baldry: Under our joint funding scheme we are providing £402,000 in support of two World Wide Fund for Nature projects to assist the Government of Madagascar in biodiversity and protected areas management, and environmental education.

As soon as Madagascar ratifies the convention on biological diversity, it will become eligible to receive funding under the global environment facility.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Baytril

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the use of the drug Baytril in farm animals; [26779]

(2) when the drug Baytril was approved for use in farm animals in the United Kingdom; and how much has been administered per month since approval; [26781]

(3) what estimates he had made on the future levels of Baytril which will be administered to United Kingdom farm animals. [26782]

Mrs. Browning: Baytril contains enrofloxacin, a synthetic broad spectrum antimicrobials, bactericidal in action and effective against a wide range of gram positive and gram negative bacteria, as well as mycoplasmas. It is presented as an oral solution; or injection for farm animals, and licensed for use in pigs, cattle and poultry. Full details are given in the 1994–95 "Compendium of Data Sheets for Veterinary Products," published by the National Office of Animal Health. The major use is in poultry for which licences were issued on 11 November 1993.

Baytril is available on veterinary prescription only and indicated for use only where clinical experience, supported where possible by sensitivity testing of the casual organism, indicates enrofloxacin as the drug of choice. Its use is therefore at the discretion of individual veterinary surgeons, in exercising their professional judgment over the treatment considered necessary on clinical grounds. For this reason, no information is available on the amounts administered per month, nor can forecasts be made on future levels of administration.

Non-human Primates

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information is available to quantify the numbers of non-human primates in transit through or via the United Kingdom for which the United Kingdom is not the final destination. [26671]

Mrs. Browning: Official records are available for all non-human primates entering the United Kingdom which have to be licensed under the Rabies (Importation of Cats, Dogs and other Mammals) Order 1974, as amended. These include animals moved immediately to another port

or airport for re-export. Non-human primates which arrive and depart from the same port or airport without entering the United Kingdom are not licensed. Details of such movements will be available from the animal holding facilities at the port or airport.

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will review importation controls for live primates entering the United Kingdom following the ebola outbreak in Zaire. [26679]

Mrs. Browning: The importation of live non-human primates originating in or coming from Zaire into the European Union is currently prohibited under Commission decision 95/171/EC following the ebola outbreak in that country. My officials are also considering whether any longer-term changes to the import controls for live non-human primates may be necessary.

Food Labelling

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what European Community restrictions apply in respect to member states independently legislating for *(a)* food labelling and *(b)* food safety. [26659]

Mrs. Browning: Food labelling is a harmonised area of legislation in the European Community and as a result member states can make new national rules only if they have been notified to the Commission and other member states and if there have been no objections.

Similar arrangements also apply in most cases of food safety legislation. However, member states have greater scope for independent action to deal with emergencies or threats to the safety of their food supplies, in accordance with article 36 of the treaty of Rome.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many foods produced using genetic modified organisms have been *(a)* licensed for sale and *(b)* labelled as from genetically modified organisms. [27212]

Mrs. Browning: Ministers have accepted the advice of the Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes and cleared, on food safety grounds, nine foods produced using genetically modified organisms. The food advisory committee has recommended that GMOs containing ethically sensitive copy genes must be labelled. None of the foods cleared so far requires such labelling, although applicants are encouraged to give informative labelling on a voluntary basis in response to public interest.

Mr Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to introduce labelling of country of origin for *(a)* meat, *(b)* meat products, *(c)* eggs and *(d)* dairy products. [27198]

Mrs. Browning: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave him on 8 June 1995 to a similar question covering meat and meat products. The situation as regards dairy products is the same.

Eggs are covered by separate EC egg marketing regulations, which already contain an option for the use of country or locality of origin descriptions. For eggs imported from third countries, the country of origin must be declared.

Deregulation

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the projects being undertaken by his Department's deregulation unit. [26941]

Mr. Jack: The departmental deregulation unit co-ordinates the Ministry's deregulation programme which covers key measures such as the deregulation of the milk market, the potato market and, more recently, the agricultural tenancy rules. The unit is currently involved in

- the completion of a comprehensive review of the Department's legislation, with a view to repeal or simplification wherever possible;
- the repeal of unnecessary primary legislation using the new deregulation order-making powers contained in the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994;
- use of the new deregulation enforcement powers contained at section 5 of the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994 following a comprehensive review of enforcement provisions;
- the preparation of compliance cost assessments for all new regulatory proposals which have the potential to impose burdens on business;
- the improvement of regulatory practice through, for example, the promotion of risk assessment and better guidance to enforcement bodies;
- action on priorities for deregulation identified by the deregulation task force;
- action to repeal or simplify national food composition regulations, and to simplify national food labelling regulations and food additives regulations.

Slaughterhouses

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many slaughterhouses in the United Kingdom have failed to reach the required standards of hygiene and animal welfare in the years 1994–95. [26956]

Mrs. Browning: Where hygiene falls below the required standards, action depends on the circumstances of the case and will range from discussions—confirmed in writing—with slaughterhouse operators explaining the specific deficiencies and suggesting improvements in working practices and equipment, to the refusal or revocation of licences. In the 1994–95 financial year in the UK we acted to refuse or revoke 19 licences on hygiene grounds, of which 11 were subsequently relicensed.

The state veterinary service made 1,982 visits to licensed red meat and poultry slaughterhouses in Great Britain last year and 206 visits to unlicensed poultry premises in England and Wales at which welfare was monitored. Figures for visits to unlicensed premises in Scotland are not available. In 17 cases—three licensed and 14 unlicensed premises—conditions were found which warranted welfare advice to be given. Where necessary, follow-up visits are made to ensure that the advice is acted upon.

In Northern Ireland departmental veterinary staff on permanent duty at meat plants regard animal welfare as a priority. Advice is provided when necessary and on no occasions were conditions found to be unacceptable.

Live Animal Exports

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in what circumstances sheep may be exported for outdoor religious slaughter, and in what circumstances such slaughter conforms with EU slaughter and hygiene regulations. [27106]

Mrs. Browning: Directive 91/628/EEC on the protection of animals during transport contains measures subject to which the transport of animals between member states is permitted. The provisions of this directive are implemented in our national law by the Welfare of Animals during Transport Order 1994, as amended.

As for slaughter, this is covered by directive 93/119/EC on the protection of animals at the time of slaughter or killing which recognises the particular requirements of certain religious rites. The directive also requires that all animals, including sheep slaughtered by a religious method outdoors, are spared any avoidable excitement, pain or suffering during their movement, lairaging, restraint or slaughter. However, outdoor religious slaughter is carried out for the owner of the animal and the meat derived from the animal is returned to the owner for his own use. As no sale is involved, such slaughter is not required to comply with EU hygiene rules, which apply only to the slaughter of animals whose flesh is intended to be placed on the market and require such slaughter to take place in approved premises.

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated number of sheep and lambs that die, each year, in transit from the United Kingdom. [26957]

Mrs. Browning: No such estimates are made.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what grounds he has decided not to implement article 36 of the treaty of Rome in respect of imposing export restrictions on grounds of public morality, public policy or the health of animals; and if he will make a statement. [27338]

Mrs. Browning: My right hon. Friend has set out in some detail the legal reasons why article 36 of the treaty of Rome is not available to justify imposing restrictions on the export of live animals. I refer the hon. Member to the reply he gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 2 February 1995, *Official Report*, columns *846–47*.

Food Science Laboratory, Torry

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost of the most recent refurbishment of the food science laboratory at Torry, Aberdeen; and if he will make a statement on the proposal to close the laboratory. [27372]

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* The most recent refurbishment of the food science laboratory at Torry took place between 1991 and 1994 at a cost of £1,997,000. It was completed before Torry became part of the enlarged central science laboratory. As to the proposal to close the Torry laboratory, I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on 6 June 1995, *Official Report*, columns *1–2*.

Fishing Vessels

Dr. Strang: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussions he has had with his Spanish counterpart in respect of avoiding acts of aggression towards United Kingdom fishing vessels; what measures are in place to ensure the safety of fishing vessels; what steps have been taken in anticipation of the opening of the tuna fisheries; and if he will make a statement. [27404]

Mr. Waldegrave *[holding answer 9 June 1995]:* We keep in close contact at ministerial, diplomatic and technical level with the Spanish authorities both directly and through EU channels. The Royal Navy has the dual role of enforcing fisheries regulations and protecting UK fishing vessels. In the case of this year's tuna fishery in the north-east Atlantic, the Government have been closely in touch with the fisheries organisations. Among other things, a procedure has been agreed for measuring and recording the length of their nets before departure to the fishing grounds and for regular checks at sea.

Wine Industry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what amount of financial support has been given by the European Community to the wine industry in each member state for the past five years; and what is the forecast of funding for each of the next three years. [28155]

Mr. Jack: Details of expenditure on the wine regime by the EU, broken down by member state, are contained in annexe 2 of the annual financial reports on the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund, guarantee section, copies of which have been deposited in the Library. The latest report available relates to 1993. Figures for the main wine-producing member states for 1994, taken from the draft annual financial report, are set out in the table.

Country	*£ million*
Germany	6.1
Greece	29.2
Spain	290.6
France	176.5
Italy	365.5
Holland	2.5
Portugal	29.4
United Kingdom	0.8
EU Total	901.3

The common agricultural policy budget is drawn up one year in advance, and is set in relation to forecast expenditure throughout the EU, and not on the basis of allocations to individual member states. The current budget for 1995 is £843 million and for 1996, £913 million.

Sheep Dips

Mr. Tyler: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what veterinary products are now approved by his Department to prevent sheep scab and flystrike which avoid the need to use organophosphorous sheep dips; and if he will make a statement. [28353]

Mrs. Browning: A number of non-organophosphorus products are licensed for the treatment of these conditions. Details are contained in the booklet "Veterinary Medicinal Products (Dips, injectables, pour ons and sprays) available in the United Kingdom for use as Ectoparasiticides in Sheep" published by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate. Copies are being placed in the Library of the House.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 14 June 1995

TREASURY

Retail Prices

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the largest percentage increase in price of any one item included in the retail prices index since May 1994. [27581]

Mr. Nelson: Average price information is available only at item level and only for selected homogeneous products. Of these average prices, the largest percentage increase was for old loose white potatoes which rose by 55 per cent. between May 1994 and April 1995.

At the section level of aggregation, which is published for the whole RPI, the largest percentage increase in any index between May 1994 and April 1995 was 41 per cent. for unprocessed potatoes.

The largest percentage increase for a non-seasonal item was 42 per cent. for filter coffee.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the change in the cost of mortgage interest since May 1994; and what effect this has had on the retail prices index. [27582]

Mr. Nelson: The percentage increase in the mortgage interest payments index between May 1994 and April 1995 contributed +0.79 percentage points to the 2.9 per cent. increase in all items RPI. During this period the average mortgage interest rate used in the calculation of this index rose from 7.70 per cent. to 8.36 per cent.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the new date will be for the payment of capital gains tax under self-assessment; how the bringing forward of its date will affect the period allowed for reinvestment relief; and in what respects he will adjust the effects of this change of date for capital gains and taxpayers in respect of periods of relief. [27933]

Sir George Young: Under self-assessment, capital gains tax will normally become due and payable on 31 January following the year of assessment to which it relates. This is later than the present date of 1 December. Reinvestment relief is available where qualifying shares are acquired within one year before, or three years after, the disposal of an asset. The change in the due and payable date for capital gains tax under self-assessment does not affect this period.

VAT (Home Care)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what plans he has to zero rate home care services for VAT purposes where the home care is provided by non-medically qualified personnel in the private sector. [28218]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: None. Any extension of existing zero rates would be contrary to the EC sixth VAT directive.

Additional Personal Allowance

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many married men with a totally incapacitated wife were entitled to the additional personal allowance for the year 1994–95. [28345]

Sir George Young: About 10,000.

Mrs. Maddock: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the annual costs of extending the additional personal allowance to married women with a totally incapacitated husband. [28343]

Sir George Young: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Inland Revenue and Contributions Agency

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor or the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the administrative savings to be made from amalgamating the Inland Revenue and the Contributions Agency. [28334]

Sir George Young: The relationship between the Contributions Agency and the Inland Revenue was examined last year. It was concluded that the overlap between the Revenue and the agency did not warrant an amalgamation of the two businesses. In addition, any efficiency gains would be outweighed by transitional costs and disruption to both departments.

Work is in hand, as part of their respective deregulatory plans, to achieve closer working between the two organisations which should offer worthwhile savings to business.

Income Tax

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the annual cost to the Exchequer of reducing the tax rate applicable to the lower rate income tax band from 20 per cent. to 10 per cent. [28140]

Sir George Young *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The direct revenue cost would be about £5.2 billion in a full year at 1995–96 income levels.

Earnings (Female)

Ms Lynne: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the number of women who have earnings below *(a)* the tax threshold and *(b)* the national insurance threshold at the latest date. [27951]

Sir George Young *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* It is estimated that in 1995–96 about 2.2 million women employees have no income tax liability, and about 2.3 million have earnings below the national insurance lower earnings limit. Some women in this latter category will be taxpayers due to income from other sources.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer on what dates he or other Ministers or former Ministers in his Department received extracts for comment from Sir Richard Scott's draft report; on what date comments were submitted to Sir Richard; and what requests have been made for an extension of the period within which comments should have been made. [27555]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The Government do not disclose details of correspondence between the inquiry and individual witnesses. In the case of draft extracts in particular, the inquiry has asked that these be treated in the strictest confidence.

Economic Statement

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the economy. [29179]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Achieving low inflation is a key feature of the Government's economic policy to deliver prosperity and secure jobs. The Government's current aim for underlying inflation is to keep within the range 1 to 4 per cent., and to get down to the lower half of the range—that is 2½ per cent. or less—by the end of the present Parliament. I am fully committed to achieving that aim and do not propose to change it.

Beyond this Parliament, I propose that our aim will be to continue to achieve underlying inflation—measured by the RPI excluding mortgage interest payments—of 2½ per cent. or less. Monetary policy will be set consistently to achieve this target. This should ensure that inflation will remain in the range 1 to 4 per cent.

Achieving this target would put us on course to achieve the best performance on inflation this country has seen for over half a century and one of the best performances in Europe.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Churchill Papers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what consideration he gave to arranging for the Sir Winston Churchill wartime documents to be circulated to museums and county archives throughout the United Kingdom, instead of being housed permanently at Churchill college, Cambridge; and if he will make a statement. [27935]

Mr. Dorrell: In making a grant to the Sir Winston Churchill archive trust, access to the archives and the conservation and presentation of the papers to scholars and the general public were always key priorities for the trustees of the national heritage memorial Fund. Churchill college, Cambridge will be mounting an exhibition of selected papers from the Churchill archive at the Jock Colville hall, from 29 June to 4 July. There are also plans to show selected papers at the British museum, at the national museums of Scotland and Wales and at other institutions in the near future.

English Heritage (Advice)

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list the occasions when advice by English Heritage in relation to urban development corporations has been overruled by a Secretary of State; and what was in each case the reason for the decision to overrule advice by English Heritage. [27785]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* My Department has no record of any cases in which English Heritage's advice on scheduled monument consent applications by urban development corporations has been overruled.

Royal William Yard, Plymouth

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what representations have been received by his Department regarding the type of slate to be used on the roof of listed buildings at Royal William yard in Plymouth, and if he is prepared to accept further representations. [27787]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* My Department has received representations from Camborne Natural Slate Ltd. As with all applications for scheduled monument consent, I will consider all relevant representations up to the time of my decision.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what plans he has to make recommendations to the Plymouth development corporation regarding the type of slate which should be used to cover the roof area of listed buildings within the Royal William yard; and if he will make a statement. [27791]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* I have no such plans. My Department has received six applications for scheduled monument consent from the Plymouth development corporation to refurbish individual buildings in the Royal William yard, Plymouth, which would include the replacement of roof slates. My Department is currently considering advice received from English Heritage, which has had discussions with the development corporation about the choice of historically appropriate slates. I will issue decisions in due course.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what is the total cost difference between using Camborne slate and Welsh slate to cover the roofs of listed buildings at Royal William yard in Plymouth. [27784]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* Precise figures cannot be released for reasons of commercial confidentiality but I understand that Welsh slates are expected to be 50 per cent. more expensive than Camborne slates.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what scientific evidence has been presented to his Department by English Heritage in respect of its decision to recommend the use of Welsh slate on the roof of listed buildings at Royal William yard in Plymouth. [27786]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* I am advised by English Heritage that Rennie's original specification for roofing material in Royal William yard merely required best sized Queen Rag slates. The actual source of the slates was not specified, and has not been identified by historical research. In practice, the choice would have been between Welsh and Cornish slates. The latter are no longer available in the quantity required, and Welsh slates remain the likely nearest equivalent historically, and the best match in terms of tones and textures.

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage what was the original slate specification in the application for monument consent by Plymouth development corporation regarding the roof area of listed buildings at Royal William yard; how many times the slate specification has since been changed; and what is the current slate specification. [27788]

Mr. Dorrell *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* None of the six applications for scheduled monument consent contained a specification for a particular source of slate when first submitted by the Plymouth development corporation. Camborne natural slates were subsequently proposed by the Plymouth development corporation for four of the applications, but all the applications have now been changed by the corporation to specify slates of Welsh origin.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid Fraud

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department how many firms of solicitors are currently being investigated for alleged legal aid fraud by the Legal Aid Board; and what were the figures in each of the last five years. [28318]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The number of detailed investigations currently being undertaken by the Legal Aid Board against solicitors' firms for alleged legal aid fraud is 87. These are all cases which have been carried forward from 1994–95. To date, no new cases have been undertaken this financial year.

The number of detailed investigations in each of the last five years is as follows:

Financial year	*Cases brought forward from previous year*	*New cases started*	*Total cases during year*
1990–91	31	28	59
1991–92	53	25	78
1992–93	60	38	98
1993–94	74	32	106
1994–95	89	28	117

EDUCATION

Chinley School

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations she has received in relation to the proposal for grant-maintained status at Chinley school, Derbyshire; and if she will give a breakdown of the nature of those representations and their origin. [28467]

Mr. Robin Squire: None.

Nursery Vouchers

Mr. Spearing: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to her answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column *9*, which of the bodies listed in the reply to the hon. Member for the City of Durham (Mr. Steinberg) of 7 February, *Official Report*, column *145*, supported the introduction of vouchers for nursery education. [28275]

Mr. Forth: Most of the responses to consultation were received before voucher funding for pre-school education became an issue for debate.

Nevertheless, written responses from the following organisations support a voucher scheme;

Incorporated Association of Preparatory Schools
National Private Day Nurseries Association
Playgroup Network
The GM Initiative.

Technology Centres

Ms Estelle Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is her Department's involvement in the network of regional technology centres being set up by the Gatsby charitable foundation; and if she will make a statement. [28280]

Mr. Forth: The Department for Education and the Office for Standards in Education are represented on the working group for this initiative. We welcome the support that the Gatsby charitable foundation is giving to technology education.

School Meals

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what was the percentage and number of children receiving *(a)* free school meals and *(b)* parentally paid for school meals for the last 10 years in England. [28439]

Mr. Robin Squire: Information on school meal arrangements in maintained schools in England since 1989 is shown in the table. Information prior to 1989 is not available on a comparable basis although results of earlier school meals censuses were published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy in, for example, "School Meal Statistics at October 1988" copies of which are available in the Library.

Number and percentages[1] of day-pupils taking paid and free school meals in maintained schools[2] in England 1989–94
Position in January each year

	Paid		*Free*	
	Number	*Percentage*	*Number*	*Percentage*
1994	1,980,295	27	1,217,126	17
1993	1,956,106	27	1,137,895	16
1992	2,001,644	28	998,872	14
1991	2,130,350	31	819,058	12
1990	2,203,226	32	762,486	11
1989	2,205,181	32	776,900	11

[1] The number of day pupils who took a paid or free meal on the census day expressed as a percentage of the number of day pupils on roll.

[2] Excludes sixth form colleges which ceased to be classified as schools in April 1993.

Bull Bars

Mr. Keith Hill: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many vehicles owned or hired by her Department are fitted with bull bars; for what reasons; and what plans she has to remove them. [28251]

Mr. Boswell: None of the vehicles owned by the Department are fitted with bull bars.

Teachers' Salaries

Mr. Nigel Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list for each education authority not in receipt of area cost adjustment the average teacher's salary for the last year for which figures are available; if she will list for each education authority in receipt of area cost adjustment the average teacher's salary for the last year for which figures are available' and whether average salaries include (i) London weighting allowances and (ii) special responsibility allowances. [28362]

Mr. Robin Squire: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. Member for Sheffield Brightside, (Mr. Blunkett) on 12 June, *Official Report*, column *417*. The average salaries quoted in the table do include London weighting allowances and incentive allowances for additional responsibilities where applicable.

Pre-school Provision

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number and percentage of four-year-olds in *(a)* maintained nursery schools and nursery classes, *(b)* reception classes in primary schools, *(c)* private or voluntary sector provision and *(d)* pre-school provision overall, at the latest available date. [28079]

Mr. Forth: The table shows the breakdown between schools for four-year-olds born between 1 January 1989 and 31 August 1989. This is based on information collected in the Department's schools' census in January 1994. It excludes both those children who were three years old on 31 August 1993 but who were four years old on 1 January 1994, and those who were four years old on 31 August 1993 but who were five years old on 1 January 1994—the rising fives.

A separate estimate of all children who were four years old on 1 January 1994 suggests that at that time 498,000 four-year-olds—77 per cent. of all children aged four—were attending maintained schools. We estimate that approximately 120,000 more—19 per cent. of all children aged four—were in some form of private or voluntary provision.

Pupils aged 4 years of age in schools in England: January 1994

School type	*Pupils*	*Percentage of population* [1]
Maintained nursery schools and infant classes	48,176	11
Infant classes in primary schools	326,634	75
Independent schools[2]	18,511	4
All schools[3]	395,384	91

[1] Full-time and part-time pupils aged 4 years of age at 31 August 1993 excluding pupils of compulsory school age in January 1994 (the rising 5s), expressed as a percentage of the relevant portion of the population aged 4 at 31 August 1993.

[2] Includes pupils in direct grant nursery schools.

[3] Includes pupils in maintained nursery, primary and special schools, non-maintained special schools and independent schools.

Student Grants

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the number and percentage of students in higher education qualifying for full maintenance grants. [20011]

Mr. Boswell: Information is collected centrally only on the effect of means testing on some grants paid to students in higher education. Provisional figures for 1993–94 show that 325,000 mandatory award holders domiciled in England and Wales received grants which were not reduced on account of their or their parents' or spouses' resources. This represents 45 per cent. of all mandatory award holders.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Firearms

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action is being taken to ensure that deactivated firearms are not brought back into use. [27908]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The standards to which firearms are deactivated have been comprehensively reviewed. Revised, more stringent specifications will be introduced shortly.

Live Performances (Minors)

Mr. Purchase: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice he has given to local authorities about the admission of minors to live performances in local authority venues of material classified as adult viewing when available on videotape. [27968]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: None. The Theatres Act 1968 does not provide for age restrictions to be included in the licensing conditions imposed by local authorities.

Equalities Associates

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) to what extent the contract for race and community relations training which was put out to tender in 1994 was similar to the previous contract awarded to Equalities Associates in 1989; and if he will list the differences; [28134]

(2) pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *152*, if the contract awarded to Equalities Associates in 1994 was the same as was tendered for by Equalities Associates and others in 1994; and if he will place copies of the contracts, for *(a)* 1989 and *(b)* 1994, in the Library. [28135]

Mr. Maclean: Details of contracts are subject to commercial confidentiality. On each occasion, bidders were invited to submit their plans for the provision of specialist support in community and race relations training for the police service. Equalities Associates provided the best combination of quality and value in competition with other bidders, and the contract with it was finalised by negotiation.

Race and Community Relations

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the central planning and training unit and the police staff college will be employing civilians and lay contributors to provide training in race and community relations in accordance with the recommendations by Lord Scarman. [28133]

Mr. Maclean: Both the central planning and training unit and the police staff college already employ civilian trainers who assist in providing community and race relations training. Both establishments work closely with the specialist support unit, Turvey, which provides training for the training staff, and with the Equal Opportunities Commission and Commission for Racial Equality who provide contributions for some courses.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, if he will provide a breakdown by ethnic origin for all staff at the police staff college, Bramshill and the central planning and training unit, Harrogate; which are civilians and which are serving police officers; if he will list the dates on which they joined the units, their grades or ranks; if he will list those who would be used as trainers for the race and community relations courses at the police staff college and the central police training unit; and if these persons would be trained to deliver race and community relations training. [28131]

Mr. Maclean: Of 108 staff at the central planning and training unit, Harrogate, 104 are white and four are of ethnic minority origin, 67 are police officers and 41 are civilians.

The most recent survey at the police staff college, Bramshill, showed that of 100 civilian staff, 91 were white, three were of ethnic minority origin, and six were not classified. The survey did not cover police officers, of whom there are currently 20.

Staff who deliver training in community and race relations at either the police staff college or at the central planning and training unit undergo appropriate training at the Home Office specialist support unit, Turvey.

The other information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *192*, if he will place in the Library a copy of the HMI (Schools) and the independent assessor's report on the specialist support unit. [28129]

Mr. Maclean: These reports will be placed in the Library.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, columns *192–93*, if he will place in the Library copies of the relevant minutes regarding funding of the Home Office specialist support unit's management board meetings. [28137]

Mr. Maclean: No. The board is not an executive body, and decisions on funding remain with the Home Office.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the expertise of the central planning and training unit and the police staff college to provide the training in race and community relations to the level that is currently being provided by the Home Office specialist support unit; and if he will make a statement. [28132]

Mr. Maclean: The present contract of the specialist support unit—requires it to provide advice and support to the central planning and training unit—EPTU—so that the latter should be capable of providing community and race relations training to police service trainers by the end of the current contract period in June 1997. The SSU provides advice to both the CPTU and Bramshill in the planning of community and race relations elements in training courses. It is for the management of the colleges to ensure training provision is effective.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *193*, how many police officers, at the level of superintendent and above, have attended the Holly Royde seminars in the last five years. [28128]

Mr. Maclean: A total of 222 officers have attended as members of the seminar over the last five years, of which 99 were at superintendent rank or above. In addition a number of senior officers, including chief constables, have contributed to the seminar programme.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *192*, if he will list the amount paid by the Home Office to the Home Office specialist support unit for race and community relations training in *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* 1994–95, and the amounts paid by HMI of constabulary to the Home Office specialist support unit in *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* 1994–95. [28136]

Mr. Maclean: Home Office funding for the unit was as follows, including provision of approximately £60,000 in each year for seconded police liaison officers:

1993–94: £598,000

1994–95: £543,000

No funding was provided to the unit by HM inspectorate of constabulary.

Mr. Bernie Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *191*, who is responsible for assessing the police trainers in their competence to deliver race and community relations training; who trained the assessors; when they were trained; and what assessment he has made of their competence to judge race and community relations training. [28130]

Mr. Maclean: Training is provided in various ways in the police service at the central planning and training unit; the police staff college at Bramshill; local police training centres; and by forces. Assessment of trainers is a matter for line managers at each venue. Specialist training for trainers and force training managers is provided at the specialist support unit, which also provides consultancy to the colleges and training centres on the planning and assessment of community and race relations inputs.

Central records are not maintained of the number of trainers, but 15 out of the 17 directors of study at CPTU, who are responsible for assessment of trainers, have received specialist training at the SSU over the last two years. In addition, a new competency-based trainers' course is being introduced there in consultation with SSU staff.

Animal Experiments (Tobacco)

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the total number of animals used in experiments in the United Kingdom to investigate the effects of tobacco products in each year between 1987 and 1993; and if he will identify separately the numbers used to investigate the effects of environmental tobacco smoke. [28115]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: I refer the hon. member to the reply given to questions from the hon. Member for Leyton (Mr. Cohen) on 30 March, *Official Report*, column *807*.

Statistics for the numbers of animals used to investigate the effects of environmental tobacco smoke are not separately recorded.

Mr. Lewis: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department under which category in Home Office statistics experiments on animals for the effects of environmental tobacco smoke are listed. [28114]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Where the primary purpose of the procedure is to study the effects of environmental tobacco smoke on body systems, it would be included in the appropriate column of the "body systems studies" section of tables 2A and 2B, and in the corresponding section of table 25. Where the primary purpose is to evaluate the general hazards posed by environmental tobacco smoke, it would be included within the safety column of the "applied studies or purposes" section of tables 2A and 2B; and also in the corresponding sections of table 25, and in the "tobacco" columns of tables 3 and 26. All references are to the "Statistics of Scientific Procedures on Liming Animals, Great Britain 1993".

The revised system for the collection of statistics, being introduced this year, will ensure that all work relating to tobacco will in future be clearly distinguished.

Child Witnesses

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what measures his Department intends to take in response to the findings of Leicester university research into the effectiveness of the special provisions for child witnesses contained in the Criminal Justice Act 1991. [27925]

Mr. Maclean: We are considering the findings of this report, and in particular whether the memorandum of good practice should be revised to take account of them.

Mr. Brazier: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he intends to revise the memorandum of good practice in child abuse cases to clarify and refine the recommendations governing the decision to interview. [27926]

Mr. Maclean: We are considering whether to revise the memorandum of good practice to take account of this and other points raised by research and experience to date.

Aids (Prisoners)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many inmates in prisons in England and Wales are currently HIV positive or have AIDS. [28006]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Neil Gerrard, dated 14 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of inmates in prisons in England and Wales who are currently HIV positive or have AIDS.

At present, 51 male and 3 female inmates are reported by prison medical officers as being HIV positive. There is no one currently in the prison system in England and Wales who is reported to have AIDS.

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners have been infected with HIV while in prison in England and Wales. [28004]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Neil Gerrard, dated 14 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about AIDS/HIV in prison.

There is only one documented case of a prisoner who clearly became infected with HIV while within the prison system in England and Wales. This infection occurred in 1993.

Prison Cells

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cells holding one prisoner in 1992–93 currently hold more than one prisoner. [28109]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Derek Lewis to Mr. Mike O'Brien, dated 14 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me to reply to your recent Question about the number of cells holding one prisoner in 1992–93 which currently hold more than one prisoner.

The information requested is not available centrally.

However, in 1992–93 the average total prison population in England and Wales was 43,903. The average number of prisoners sharing a cell designed for one was 7,727, 17.6% of the total population. On 26 May 1995, the total prison population in England and Wales was 50,802. The number of prisoners sharing a cell designed for one was 8,362, 16.5% of the total population.

Mr. Marc Rich

Mr. MacShane: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received about the charges relating to tax fraud faced by Mr. Marc Rich from US authorities. [28073]

Mr. Maclean: As far as I can ascertain, no representations on this subject have been received recently. This is an operational matter which falls entirely within the responsibility of the chief constable.

Disabled Police Officers

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers became disabled in each year since 1992–93; how many of those were found employment within the police service; and what arrangements were made for those not found such employment. [27996]

Mr. Maclean *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The information is not available. However, information is available for 1992 and 1993 on the numbers of medical retirement, and is shown in the table.

Police service medical retirements

Forces	*1992*	*1993*
Avon and Somerset	54.00	68.00
Bedfordshire	7.00	9.00
Cambridgeshire	9.00	19.00
Cheshire	34.00	31.00
City of London	10.00	11.00
Cleveland	52.00	40.00
Cumbria	20.00	26.00
Derbyshire	55.00	54.00

Police service medical retirements

Forces	*1992*	*1993*
Devon and Cornwall	40.00	49.00
Dorset	12.00	26.00
Durham	21.00	39.00
Dyfed-Powys	22.00	22.00
Essex	27.00	25.00
Gloucestershire	15.00	13.00
Greater Manchester	149.00	162.00
Gwent	23.00	18.00
Hampshire	32.00	40.00
Hertfordshire	12.00	19.00
Humberside	26.00	40.00
Kent	57.00	80.00
Lancashire	52.00	86.00
Leicestershire	46.00	60.00
Lincolnshire	24.00	24.00
Merseyside	99.00	132.00
Norfolk	15.00	17.00
North Wales	35.00	39.00
North Yorkshire	30.00	78.00
Northamptonshire	26.00	15.00
Northumbria	89.00	97.00
Nottinghamshire	56.00	59.00
South Wales	29.00	31.00
South Yorkshire	64.00	82.00
Staffordshire	67.00	74.00
Suffolk	19.00	20.00
Surrey	19.00	16.00
Sussex	38.00	36.00
Thames Valley	38.00	30.00
Warwickshire	10.00	19.00
West Mercia	28.00	23.00
West Midlands	67.00	71.00
West Yorkshire	228.00	150.00
Wiltshire	8.00	10.00
Provincial Total	1,764.00	1,960.00
Metropolitan Police	310.00	344.00
England and Wales Total	2,074.00	2,304.00

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Scott Report

Mr. Byers: To ask the Attorney-General which Ministers, former Ministers or civil servants, in his Department have sought independent legal advice in assisting their response to draft extracts from Sir Richard Scott's report; in each case from whom the advice has been sought; and what limit has been placed on payment for such advice from public funds. [28387]

The Attorney-General: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister today.

Private Prosecutions

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Attorney-General on how many occasions in the last five years the Director of Public Prosecutions has taken over a private prosecution and then dropped it; and if he will list the details. [21738]

The Attorney-General *[holding answer 4 May 1995]:* Crown Prosecution Service headquarters has asked senior staff who might reasonably be expected to recall private prosecutions which have been taken over by the Crown Prosecution Service and terminated to provide details of such cases. The table sets out the number of such cases in relation to each CPS area and CPS headquarters casework division.

The numbers cited cannot be taken as definitive because the information given is based on staff memory. It relates to the period since April 1993 when the present CPS areas came into being.

Private prosecutions: prosecutions taken over and discontinued by the CPS since April 1993

Area	*Number of cases*	*Reason for discontinuance*
Anglia	0	—
East Midlands	1	Public interest
Humber	0	—
London	3	1. Public interest 2. Public interest 3. Evidence
Mersey/Lancashire	0	—
Midlands	1	Evidence
North	2	1. Evidence 2. Public interest
North West	0	—
Severn/Thames	1	Public interest
South East	2	1. Evidence 2. Evidence
South West	1	Public interest
Wales	0	—
Yorkshire	0	—
Headquarters Casework	2	1. Evidence 2. Evidence
Total	13	

PRIME MINISTER

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister how many written parliamentary questions were tabled for answer by his Department in each of the past five years; how many of these were not answered because the information *(a)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, *(b)* was not held centrally and *(c)* was not normally disclosed; how many of these could now be answered due to computerisation, more effective and efficient operational systems or more open government; and if he will list each question along with the name and constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member who originally tabled it. [28522]

The Prime Minister: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Public Appointments

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister if he will list the appointments which he is specifically required and/or able to make by virtue of his office; and if he will list those appointments which arise during the next 12 months; and if he will list the name, age, expected time commitment, place of residence, current or previous occupation and salary, honorarium, allowance or payment for each post; and if he will make a statement. [28536]

The Prime Minister: A list of the appointments to public bodies which I am able to make as Prime Minister and First Lord of the Treasury is available in the Library

of the House. It is not possible to know all those appointments which will arise in the next 12 months. The details requested for each post are not available.

Director General of Gas Supply

Dr. Spink: To ask the Prime Minister what action he intends to take to resist excessive pay demands from those who serve the public; and if he will make a statement on the recent pay claim from the Director General of Ofgas. [27322]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend, the President of the Board of Trade to the hon. Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 13 June, *Official Report*, columns *451-52*.

Government Property

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Prime Minister how many houses and flats are owned by Government departments; and how many of these are currently empty. [27796]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* Up-to-date information is being calculated and will be published by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment in due course.

Scott Report

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister which Ministers, former Ministers or civil servants have sought independent legal advice in assisting their response to draft extracts from Sir Richard Scott's report; in each case from whom the advice has been sought; and what limit has been placed on payment for such advice from public funds. [28386]

The Prime Minister *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* Sir Richard Scott has requested that all those in receipt of extracts from his draft report should hold this material in confidence. The Government are not aware of the identity of all the recipients and, in accordance with the vice-chancellor's request, would not consider it right to disclose the identity of those recipients of whom it is aware.

Apart from legal advice from departmental lawyers, legal services have been provided to witnesses to the inquiry by the Treasury Solicitor's department and by external lawyers. In each case their costs are subject to the approval of the legal advisers to the Departments who are responsible for payment.

TRANSPORT

Railway Restructuring

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what provision he is making for the additional costs being incurred by the English passenger transport authorities and their executives as a result of the restructuring of the railways. [29266]

Mr. Watts: A special grant report has been laid before the house today for the payment of metropolitan railway grant in 1995–96 to English passenger transport authorities. The broad aim of MRG is to provide support to those PTAs for the additional costs failing to be met by the PTAs in the financial year 1995–96 for the railway passenger services provided by British Rail to those authorities' passenger transport executives, arising from the restructuring of railways in Great Britain in accordance with the Railways Act 1995.

Airline Pilots

Sir Peter Emery: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list his Department's individual replies to the specific objections in respect of the Civil Aviation Authority proposals made by the British Airline Pilots Association on *(a)* flight and duty times, *(b)* split duty, *(c)* time zone crossing, *(d)* rest requirement, *(e)* augment crew and *(f)* standby. [27330]

Mr. Norris: The Civil Aviation Authority is responsible for flight and duty time limitation schemes, including technical assessment of the joint aviation authorities' proposals. The Department has not responded in detail to the British Airline Pilots Association's specific objections as these are a matter for the authority. However, the authority has assured my noble Friend the Minister for Aviation that the JAA proposals, if introduced, would provide an equivalent level of protection against the onset of fatigue to the current United Kingdom requirements.

Road Registration Act 1984

Mr. Bennett: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the orders made under section 20 of the Road Regulation Act 1984 or its predecessor sections since 1965. [28220]

Mr. Norris: No such orders have been made.

Railways (Staffing)

Ms Bridget Prentice: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many stations within *(a)* the Tilbury and Southend region, *(b)* the south-eastern operating region, *(c)* the Gatwick express region, *(d)* the Network South Central region, *(e)* the south west train operating region, *(f)* the Thameslink operating region, *(g)* the Anglia operating region, *(h)* the Great Eastern operating region, *(i)* the West Anglia and Great Northern operating region and *(j)* the North London Railways operating region are unstaffed after 6 pm and at weekends; and if he will provide equivalent figures for 1979; [28011]

(2) how many stations within the Thames train operating region unstaffed after 6 pm and at weekends; and if he will provide equivalent figures for 1979. [28016]

Mr. Watts: The information requested is a matter for British Rail. I understand that it does not hold this information centrally. It is therefore not readily available.

Yachtsmen

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has commissioned in the last three years into the effect on the behaviour of yachtsmen of *(a)* seasickness remedies, *(b)* alcohol, *(c)* wave motion. [27536]

Mr. Norris: None.

Intoxicated Helmsmen

Mr. Barry Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the latest estimate of the total number of *(a)* registered and *(b)* unregistered boats and small craft in the United Kingdom; and what percentage of them have been found to be under the command of an intoxicated helmsman in each of the last three years. [27535]

Mr. Norris: There are approximately 75,000 yachts and small craft on the United Kingdom shipping register; statistics are not held on the number of unregistered vessels. No records are kept on the percentage of these vessels that have been found under the command of intoxicated helmsmen.

Flight Data Recorders

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will introduce legislation as a matter of urgency to ensure that all aircraft equipped to carry fare paying passengers are fitted with flight data recorders irrespective of the number of fare-paying passengers; and if he will make a statement. [27401]

Mr. Norris: The joint aviation authorities are responsible for setting the criteria for the fitting of flight data recorders. The joint aviation requirement on commercial air transportation adopted on 1 April specifies that all new aircraft with more than nine passenger seats be equipped with flight data recorders. This is in line with existing United Kingdom legislation.

The Civil Aviation Authority does not believe that the fitting of flight data recorders to smaller aircraft would increase aviation safety in the UK.

Waste, Ports

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the waste reception facilities available at each United Kingdom port and the amount of waste collected by each port for the last five years. [26111]

Mr. Norris: The Marine Safety Agency has recently conducted a questionnaire survey of the provision of waste reception facilities. Copies have been placed in the House Library. Information on the amount of waste collected by ports for the last five years is not available.

DEFENCE

Joint Headquarters, Northwood

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what is the *(a)* role, *(b)* establishment and *(c)* cost of set-up of the new joint military operations headquarters at Northwood; and if he will make a statement. [27394]

Mr. Soames: The establishment of the new permanent joint headquarters will significantly enhance the United Kingdom's ability to plan and conduct joint operations. Its role will be to draw together contingency planning, co-ordinate joint operational activities, joint training and exercises, and act as a focus for joint doctrine. In so doing, it will eradicate the disadvantages inherent in the current system of creating an ad hoc JHQ. Detailed work on the establishment continues, but it is expected to be around 330 permanent staff, including watchkeepers to allow the HQ to function on a 24-hour basis. The initial costs of setting up the JHQ are estimated at some £12,000,000, and the running costs, including manpower, at some £15,000,000 per annum. Annual running costs are expected to be offset by compensating reductions in manpower and other costs elsewhere in the Department.

Military Base Inspections

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many inspections of military bases in the United Kingdom were made under the terms of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty in *(a)* 1994 and *(b)* 1995 to-date; and what was the result of each inspection. [28271]

Mr. Soames: None.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many inspections of overseas United Kingdom forces' military bases under the terms of the intermediate nuclear forces treaty were made in *(a)* 1994 and *(b)* 1995 to date; and what was the result of each inspection. [28270]

Mr. Soames: None. The United Kingdom is not a state party to the intermediate range nuclear forces treaty and therefore our military bases are not subject to inspection under the treaty.

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what information Her Majesty's Government possess on the number of nuclear weapons currently deployed in non-nuclear weapons states by each of the five countries defined as nuclear weapons powers by the non-proliferation treaty. [27650]

Mr. Soames: Under NATO nuclear burden sharing arrangements, US and United Kingdom nuclear weapons may be deployed in some other alliance countries. We do not comment on the details of current weapon deployments within the alliance. Russia still has nuclear weapons on the territories of Ukraine and Belarus.

Nimrod

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence when and where the last major servicing of the recently crashed Nimrod was carried out; and if this was the responsibility of a civilian contractor. [27909]

Mr. Soames: The Nimrod which ditched into the Moray firth on 16 May was on a routine test flight having just completed a major servicing at RAF Kinloss. As I made clear in my answer of 25 May to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), *Official Report*, column 659, the servicing was carried out by RAF personnel.

Defence Animal Centre

Mr. Duncan: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the Defence Animal Centre in 1995–96. [29065]

Mr. Soames: The key targets for the Defence Animal Centre in 1995–96 are as follows.

1. Review and where necessary establish service level agreements (SLA), or the appropriate equivalent, with customers.

2. Meet at least 95 per cent. of SLA targets.

3. Implement an interim output costing system.

4. Reduce the net full cost, as shown in the accruals account, by 2.5 per cent.

6. Through the MOD competing for quality programme, identify and realise the full value for money potential in the DAC.

Defence Postal and Courier Agency

Mr. Butler: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the key targets for the Defence Postal and Courier Agency for 1995–96. [29265]

Mr. Soames: The chief executive of the Defence Postal and Courier Services Agency has been set the following key targets for 1995–96:

1. Achieve BS EN 9002 for BFPO London.

2. Increase efficiency by 0.5 per cent. against the 1994–95 target by input or output means.

3. Both postal and courier Services to maintain present levels of service whilst implementing Defence Costs Study No 10 recommendations.

Queen Victoria School

Mr. Heald: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what key targets have been set for the Queen Victoria school in 1995–96. [29241]

Mr. Soames: The key targets for the Queen Victoria school in 1995–96 are as follows:

Academic Curriculum

To achieve at least three standard grade passes at credit and general levels for 90 per cent. of S4 pupils. To achieve at least five standard grades—1 to 3—for 60 per cent. of S4 pupils. To achieve three higher passes at A to C grades for 60 per cent. of S5/S6 leavers. To achieve 90 per cent. successful completion of SCOTVEC modules started on or before 9 January 1996. To continue with the phased implementation of 5 to 14 national programme, in line with SOED recommendations; initially in English language, maths and environmental studies. Included in this will be the corresponding recording, reporting and assessment procedures in these areas. In addition, to trial team teaching of science in P7 using senior and junior school staff. To review and where appropriate update curricular guidance for S4/S5 as detailed by the Scottish Consultative Council on Curriculum January 1990.

Pastoral

To continue to monitor the effectiveness of the school pastoral policy and organisation document and, specifically, to produce a school policy on anti-bullying by 31 March 1996. To introduce improved career guidance provision.

Parents' Charter
To improve communication with parents and their involvement in the school by examining the requirement, in consultation with parents, for a parents' association.

Extra-Curricular Provision
To maintain and enrich the extensive extra-curricular activities, physical, cultural, social and academic.

Staffing
To continue with teacher appraisal and development by completing an agreed person job description with all teaching staff by 31 March 1996.

Marketing
To maintain the improved marketing procedures adopted in 1994–95. To review and improve the prospectus, especially with a view to girls' entry.

Admission of Girls
To continue with the planning and work services programme, appropriate to the admission of girls for both sessions 1996–97 and 1997–98.

Management
To review and improve joining instructions to the school both primary and secondary. To follow the SOED's guidelines for school development plans—Scotland 19 January 1994—and, having linked in with the central region phase 2 schools, have a school development plan ready for January 1996. To carry out a study of the current accounting systems and reduce the number of accounting procedures necessary.

Finance
To maintain standards within the budget allocated. To generate non-public income to the school of 1 per cent. of the school cash budget.

Equal Opportunities
To ensure that the School conforms to the Adjutant General's equal opportunities action plan.

Attack Helicopters

Mr. Rowe: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that, in his consideration of bids for the procurement of attack helicopters for the British Army, he will take into account the capacity to fly operationally from the Royal Navy's aircraft carriers and assault ships. [28356]

Mr. Freeman: The capability for contenders in the attack helicopter competition to operate in support of amphibious operations from Her Majesty's ships was a feature of the invitation to tender. The resulting bid data are being considered as part of the overall technical assessment.

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what military threats the attack helicopter is being procured to combat. [28332]

Mr. Freeman: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to my right hon. Friend the Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Mr. Jopling) on 31 January, *Official Report*, column *560*.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence which Ministers, former Ministers or civil servants in his Department have sought independent legal advice in assisting their response to draft extracts from Sir Richard Scott's report; in each case from whom the advice has been sought; and what limit has been placed on payment for such advice from public funds. [28388]

Mr. Freeman *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* Sir Richard Scott has requested that all those in receipt of extracts from his draft report should hold this material in confidence. The Government are not aware of the identity of all the recipients and, in accordance with the vice-chancellor's request, would not consider it right to disclose the identity of those recipients of whom it is aware.

Apart from legal advice from departmental lawyers, legal services have been provided to witnesses to the inquiry by the Treasury Solicitor's Department and by external lawyers. In each case their costs are subject to the approval of the legal advisers to the Departments who are responsible for payment.

Naval Support Command

Mr. Stern: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what are his plans for the restructuring of the Naval Support Command and the location of its headquarters. [29264]

Mr. Soames: To enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of our support for the fleet, we are proposing to restructure the Naval Support Command with effect from 1 October 1995. The current responsibilities for the upkeep of ships and their systems would be brought together under one director general, DG Ships, when the two separate posts of Director General Fleet Support (Ships) and (Equipment and Systems) would lapse. Secondly, all NSC naval base and logistic support matters would progressively become the responsibility of a single director general, Director General Naval Bases and Supply (DGNBS); the post of Director General Supplies and Transport (Naval) would lapse. No major changes are planned to the other elements of the Naval Support Command Headquarters.

I am pleased to be able to announce proposals for the location of the NSC headquarters. The NSC HQ, apart from DG Ships, but including DGNBS, is planned to concentrate progressively at the Ensleigh site in Bath. The new DG Ships organisation would be collocated with the Procurement Executive at Abbey Wood over the next few years, with the aim of transferring some 1,700 posts to Abbey Wood by the end of 1998, and a total of 2,100 by the end of 2000. At Abbey Wood, space in the buildings already being constructed would be used, augmented by the construction of an additional office building.

These proposals provide the NSC HQ, apart from DG Ships, with suitable accommodation at Ensleigh, Bath; enable DG Ships to be collocated in modern, flexible office accommodation, alongside the PE with significant and important business benefits to both organisations; make effective use of available space at Abbey Wood; minimize the requirements for up-front capital investment; and enable the NSC to vacate a range of sites.

As a result of these proposals, significant numbers of MOD staff would remain in Bath; in addition to the 1,200 NSC staff planned for Ensleigh, there are about 1,000 other MOD staff based in Bath who are not affected by this proposal or the PE's move to Abbey Wood.

I fully appreciate the impact that the closure of Defence sites can have on the local community, and we would investigate any possible alternative MOD use for Foxhill, and other MOD sites being given up. If none is found, we would work closely with the local authorities concerned

and the regional government offices to establish how the sites could best be redeveloped, within the guidelines under which MOD is required to dispose of surplus property, taking account of local social, economic and employment considerations.

These proposals would remove the uncertainty for NSC staff who are expecting to collocate in the Bath/Bristol area and who are currently situated at Eaglescliffe, Portsmouth, Gosport, Weymouth, Portland and London and on several sites in the Bath area. I am nevertheless aware that their implementation would cause disruption for many staff. The moves would, however, take place over a period of some years. We would of course make every effort to minimise disruption by careful planning and by giving as much notice and advance information to staff as possible.

These proposals are subject to detailed consultation in the usual way. A consultation document is being issued today.

Low Flying

Mr. Alan W. Williams: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how much was paid in compensation for livestock-related losses to farmers in Wales caused by low-flying military aircraft during 1994. [27672]

Mr. Soames: The total compensation paid, as a result of military aircraft activity, in respect of livestock losses in Wales during 1994, amounts to £72,964.51.

Departmental Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list for 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95, the occasions on which his Department has sought prior approval for the sale of assets in accordance with the Treasury guidelines on the disposal of surplus Government land; and if he will make a statement. [28393]

Mr. Soames: In the years in question prior Treasury approval for the sale of surplus land belonging to my Department in the United Kingdom was sought in relation to the following sites: 1992–93 land at Dean Row road, Wilmslow; 1993–94—central vehicle depot, Hilton and Ordnance Survey depot, Ruddington; 1994–95—the Queen Elizabeth military hospital, Greenwich.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, what clause in the sale contract allowing his Department to obtain a share of any future development gain were included in the sale of *(a)* RAF base Chessington, Surrey to a consortium involving Bryant Homes and Sir Alfred McAlpine, *(b)* Willems Park, Aldershot to Tesco plc, *(c)* Bramley, Hampshire, to Wimpey and *(d)* RNAD Milford Haven to Waterfront Development, Pembroke. [28395]

Mr. Soames: The contract for the sale of Royal Naval armament depot, Milford Haven does not include a clawback arrangement. Each of the other contracts referred to required the purchaser to pay a lump sum for the property at the time of purchase together with one or more further payments in the event that planning permission was secured which would increase the value of the site. The specific details in each case are commercial in confidence between my Department and the purchaser.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security how many written parliamentary questions were tabled for answer by his Department in each of the past five years; how many of these were not answered because the information *(a)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, *(b)* was not held centrally and *(c)* was not normally disclosed; how many of these could now be answered due to computerisation, more effective and efficient operational systems or more open government; and if he will list each question along with the name and constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member who originally tabled it. [28510]

Mr. Hague: The information requested could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Poverty

Ms Corston: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security when he proposes to issue a precise definition, measurement, criteria and indicators of absolute poverty, as required by the agreement contained in article 26d at the world summit for social development in Copenhagen in March. [26759]

Mr. Burt: The agreement reached at the UN world summit for social development recognises that indicators of poverty and vulnerability should be developed in the light of national circumstances. However, the characteristics of absolute poverty outlined in paragraph 19 of the programme of action are not typical of individuals in a well developed industrialised country such as the United Kingdom. I do not therefore propose to take action in pursuit of paragraph 26d, beyond the coverage of existing regular statistics and surveys.

Expenditure

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what was the expenditure on cash benefits for the long term sick and disabled for each year from 1969–70 to 1979–80. [28209]

Mr. Hague: Such information as is available is given in the table. Comparable information is not available for earlier years.

Expenditure on long term sick and disabled

	£ million
1973–74	569
1974–75	713
1975–76	982
1976–77	1,251
1977–78	1,509
1978–79	1,771
1979–80	2,081

Child Support Agency

Ms Lynne: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is *(a)* the number of prisoners approached by the Child Support Agency with a view to assessing them for maintenance and *(b)* the number of prisoners

assessed by the Child Support Agency for maintenance since the launch of the Child Support Agency; and if he will provide the figures in both categories broken down on a month by month basis. [27999]

Mr. Burt: The administration of the Child Support Agency is a matter for the chief executive, Miss Ann Chant. She will write to the hon. Member.

Letter from Ann Chant to Ms Liz Lynne, dated 13 June 1995:

I am replying to your Parliamentary Question to the Secretary of State for Social Security about prisoners contacted and assessed by the Child Support Agency for child maintenance.

The information you require is not available as the Agency does not collate separate information on absent parents (AP) while they are in prison.

The Agency uses the same process for establishing a maintenance liability for APs who are in prison as for any other AP. Should an AP be committed to prison during the assessment process, or after the maintenance liability has been established, the Agency will take into account the change in circumstances in the normal way.

EMPLOYMENT

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what plans he has for an appeals process in respect of companies denied training accreditation by TECs. [26839]

Mr. Paice: We have no such plans.

Disabled People

Mr. Hall: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what measures his Department is taking to encourage more disabled people to pursue careers in engineering-based and technology-based industries. [26816]

Miss Widdecombe: The careers service provides advice and guidance for young people on careers in all sectors of the economy including engineering and technology-based industries. People with disabilities have access to careers service advice until they are settled in their career intention.

The Department also has a wide range of services and employment and training programmes, which are accessed through the Employment Service, to assist disabled people to obtain and retain employment and to pursue their chosen career. This includes careers in engineering and technology-based industries.

The Government have also introduced a Disability Discrimination Bill which will make it unlawful for an employer to treat a disabled person less favourably because of his or her disability, without justifiable reason.

Industrial Accidents

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many accidents involving fatality or resulting in injury were recorded in the first three months of 1995; and what is the rate of injury recorded in relationship to shifts or hours worked. [27910]

Mr. Oppenheim: The data for the first three months of 1995 are not yet available. Provisional figures for the year 1994–95 will be published in the annual report of the Health and Safety Commission in the autumn.

ENVIRONMENT

Planning Applications, Westminster

Mr. Robert Ainsworth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will issue an article 14 direction to prevent Westminster city council from issuing any planning consents for the buildings at 20A–32 Baker street, London, W1, until the police have had time to consider conducting an investigation into material submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service by Councillor Peter Bradley. [27775]

Sir Paul Beresford: The Secretary of State has issued an article 14 direction to enable him to consider whether or not he should direct under section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 that the outstanding planning applications should be referred to him for his determination.

Thorne and Hatfield Moors

Mr. Kevin Hughes: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what area in hectares of Thorne and Hatfield moors sites of special scientific interest is *(a)* currently notified as being a site of special scientific interest, *(b)* subject to planning permission for the extraction of peat and *(c)* currently being proposed by the Government for inclusion in the special area of conservation under the EU habitats and species directive. [28127]

Sir Paul Beresford: The areas involved are *(a)* 3,319.3 hectares; *(b)* 2,437.5 hectares; and *(c)* an area of Thorne moor of 1,019 hectares about which the Government have consulted.

National Parks

Mr. McLoughlin: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how much each council receives in England in standard spending assessment for national parks; and which councils have national parks in their areas. [28078]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: Local authorities' contributions to expenditure on national parks are included within a large group of local authority services known as "all other services", for which the national total standard spending assessment is £7,426.1 million in 1995–96. The SSAs do not distinguish portion which can be attributed to national parks. The portion of the "approved expenditure" of national parks in 1995–96 which is expected to be contributed by local authorities is some £5.5 million.

The following authorities have national parks within their areas:

Authorities	*National parks*
Devon county council	Dartmoor Exmoor
Somerset county council	Exmoor
Cumbria county council	Lake District Yorkshire Dales
Northumberland county council	Northumberland
North Yorkshire county council	North York Moors Yorkshire Dales
Cleveland county council	North York Moors

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Authorities	National parks
Derbyshire county council Staffordshire county council Cheshire country council Oldham metropolitan borough council Barnsley metropolitan borough council Sheffield city council Kirklees metropolitan borough council	Peak District

Old Denaby Wetland Site

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to announce his decision in respect of Doncaster metropolitan borough council's application for a compulsory purchase order to preserve the wetland site at Old Denaby; and if he will make a statement. [28266]

Sir Paul Beresford: Doncaster metropolitan borough council has not yet made a compulsory purchase order for the preservation of this wetland site. If it does make an order, it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for confirmation and, if opposed, may then be the subject of a public local inquiry.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment how a many written parliamentary questions were tabled for answer by his Department in each of the past five years; how many of these were not answered because the information *(a)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, *(b)* was not held centrally and *(c)* was not normally disclosed; how many of these could now be answered due to computerisation, more effective and efficient operational systems or more open government; and if he will list each question along with the name and constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member who originally tabled it. [28513]

Sir Paul Beresford: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list, for 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95, the occasions on which his Department has sought prior approval for the sale of assets in accordance with the Treasury guidelines on the disposal of surplus Government land; and if he will make a statement. [28392]

Sir Paul Beresford: Under the rules governing the disposal of land and buildings, Treasury approval is required where:

(a) A Department wishes to dispose of property for less than the best price which can be obtained in the market.

(b) Because there are or are likely to be unusual delays in resolving uncertainties about the planning position a Department proposes to dispose of property considered to have development potential before planning consent has been obtained.

(c) A Department wishes to dispose of a property to a selected purchaser by private treaty in circumstances where the professional advice is that this method of sale might not have an advantage over the sale by tender or auction.

(d) Where the disposal falls outside the limits delegated by the Treasury.

None of the disposals effected by my Department over the period 1992 to 1995 fell into these categories. There were, however, five cases where, although formal planning decisions had been obtained or the planning position thoroughly researched, it was considered that the purchaser might be able to resell at some future date for a higher figure; hence, to be absolutely sure that the Exchequer interest was protected, clawback clauses were imposed.

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre

Mr. Sumberg: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what performance targets he has set the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre executive agency for 1995–96. [29267]

Sir Paul Beresford: The agency's principal target for 1995–96 is to achieve a net surplus of £3,000. Following several years of progressive reduction in the centre's operating deficit, it is possible this year for the first time to target a surplus. This is exclusive of rent of £6.4 million.

The agency's other key targets are:

(a) to increase total revenue from £5.5 million to £5.8 million;

(b) to reduce debt outstanding from clients for over 60 days to no more than £154,000.

A market test is currently in progress to determine whether there is any advantage to be obtained in contracting out the managing of the centre to a private sector company.

Homelessness

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the number of households living in temporary accommodation. [27963]

Mr. Robert B. Jones *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* Information on the numbers of households which have applied for permanent rehousing under the homelessness legislation and were in temporary accommodation is given in the quarterly information bulletin "Households found accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the Housing Act 1985, England".

The figures cover both households which have been accepted and are waiting for permanent accommodation, and those where inquiries into eligibility are still being carried out.

Copies of the bulletins, the latest of which relates to the fourth quarter of 1994, are in the Library.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Local Authority Social Services

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list, for each available year since 1970, the number of cases of assistance by local authority social service departments, showing separately for each year *(a)* the number of telephone installations, *(b)* telephone adaptations, *(c)* telephone rentals paid, *(d)* installations of other communications equipment, *(e)* television installations, *(f)* payment of television licences or rentals, *(g)* the number of radio sets provided, *(h)* the number of personal aids provided, *(i)* the number of adaptations to property and *(j)* the number of holidays provided. [28200]

Mr. Moss: In Northern Ireland, social services are provided by the four health and social services boards. The information requested is not available before 1979. Available information for each health and social services board is as follows:

The number of cases of assistance to persons by the social services departments

Board of residence: northern

Types of assistance provided	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Telephone							
Installations	446	174	137	148	158	155	208
Attachments installed	7	10	12	15	14	25	23
Rentals	513	847	846	749	678	577	508
Other communication equipment installed	0	1	4	3	6	7	2
Television							
Installations	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Licence fees or rentals	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Radio sets supplied	0	0	2	0	1	0	10
Other personal aids	2,405	2,649	2,729	3,006	3,097	3,854	4,051
Adaptations to private property[1]	337	321	391	681	826	893	832
Holidays	n/a	n/a	664	259	281	340	346

[1] Does not include adaptations carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The number of cases of assistance to persons by the social services department

Board of residence: northern

Types of assistance provided	*1986*	*1987*	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Telephone								
Installations	151	147	199	140	89	109	245	212
Attachments installed	26	19	19	18	13	32	1	2
Rentals	137	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other communication equipment installed	5	15	14	45	40	137	9	35
Television								
Installations	0	0	1	0	13	36	25	0
Licence fees or rentals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radio sets supplied	0	0	11	0	0	0	26	30
Other personal aids	3,789	4,300	[1]4,628	[2]4,374	[3]4,636	3,565	4,854	3,745
Adaptations to private property[4]	710	959	[1]1,220	[2]943	1,236	1,350	1,435	817
Holidays	350	153	124	114	72	63	64	17

[1] 1987 data used for Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle unit of management.
[2] Estimated data used for Coleraine, Ballymoney and Moyle unit of management.
[3] 1987 data used for Causeway unit of management.
[4] Does not include adaptations carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The number of cases of assistance to persons by the social services departments

Board of residence: southern

Types of assistance provided	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Telephone							
Installations	60	27	54	47	45	33	41
Attachments installed	1	0	13	12	3	3	4
Rentals	100	114	193	238	256	267	272
Other communication equipment installed	15	17	18	30	47	37	32
Television							
Installations	1	3	1	2	0	1	0
Licence fees or rentals	0	2	7	5	6	5	4
Radio sets supplied	16	12	0	14	7	10	7
Other personal aids	913	1,016	1,135	[1]539	1,991	1,851	1,759
Adaptations to private property[2]	95	119	167	213	300	407	426
Holidays	n/a	n/a	209	[3]102	203	230	211

[1] Incomplete return received from Newry and Mourne unit management.
[2] Does not include adaptations carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
[3] Information not available for Newry and Mourne unit of management.

The number of cases of assistance to persons by the social services department

Board of residence: southern

Types of assistance provided	*1986*	*1987*	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*[1]
Telephone								
Installations	32	39	47	59	51	64	92	79
Attachments installed	10	7	4	26	30	35	39	60
Rentals	286	309	306	277	306	310	255	314
Other communication equipment installed	51	57	115	115	95	168	308	434
Television								
Installations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Licence fees or rentals	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	0
Radio sets supplied	9	13	7	6	9	11	17	0
Other personal aids	2,381	2,369	2,525	1,512	1,554	1,830	3,041	1,845
Adaptations to private property[2]	582	723	764	1,370	957	946	823	934
Holidays	208	213	136	132	140	197	21	12

[1] Provisional data.
[2] Does not include adaptations carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The number of cases of assistance to persons by the social services departments

Board of residence: eastern

Types of assistance provided	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Telephone							
Installations	537	583	362	258	480	344	153
Attachments installed	28	6	10	6	4	3	3
Rentals	540	1,221	1,759	2,029	2,375	2,644	2,153
Other communication equipment installed	92	57	59	38	57	50	82
Television							
Installations	5	51	7	4	2	2	0
Licence fees or rentals	5	43	118	102	101	81	60
Radio sets supplied	168	240	0	2	0	0	0
Other personal aids	3,781	4,317	5,072	5,247	7,066	5,072	[4]5,392
Adaptations to private property[2]	244	291	699	1,075	1,821	1,587	1,920
Holidays	n/a	n/a	884	932	1,546	1,881	1,282

[1] Data not available for North Down and Ards unit of management.
[2] Does not include adaptations carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The number of cases of assistance to persons by the social services department

Board of residence: Eastern

Types of assistance provided	*1986*	*1987*	*[1]1988–89*	*[2]1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*[3]1993–94*
Telephone								
Installations	111	76	85	48	80	46	79	82
Attachments installed	2	1	2	3	0	55	74	94
Rentals	360	0	0	78	0	0	0	0
Other communication equipment installed	56	22	72	5	177	216	15	287
Television								
Installations	0	0	0	0	35	30	0	0
Licence fees or rentals	52	20	1	0	7	31	320	321
Radio sets supplied	0	0	0	0	0	88	140	116
Other personal aids	5,236	6,891	[4]6,891	[5]8,826	11,765	5,221	6,926	6,982
Adaptations to private property[6]	2,038	[7]1,814	1,664	1,532	[8]2,820	2,340	1,713	1,513
Holidays	1,094	1,059	457	[9]232	[10]262	105	106	112

[1] Includes 1987 data for South Belfast unit of management. [2] Data not available for South Belfast unit of management.
[3] Provisional data.
[4] 1987 data used for all units of management.
[5] Estimated (1987) data used for East Belfast and Castlereagh unit of management.
[6] Does not include adaptations carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
[7] Includes 1986 data for East Belfast and Castlereagh unit of management.
[8] 1989–90 data used for all units of management.
[9] Data not available for Down and Lisburn unit of management.
[10] Data not available for South and East Belfast and Down and Lisburn units of management.

The number of cases of assistance to persons by the social services departments

Board of residence: Western

Types of assistance provided	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Telephone							
Installations	128	147	109	132	186	249	127
Attachments installed	1	1	5	3	2	7	11
Rentals	225	344	620	718	795	914	890
Other communication equipment installed	11	2	19	7	8	16	29
Television							
Installations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Licence fees or rentals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radio sets supplied	32	6	8	6	7	17	28
Other personal aids	434	237	248	308	433	575	462
Adaptations to private property[1]	24	23	19	34	25	33	68
Holidays	n/a	n/a	291	357	342	389	305

[1] Does not include adaptations carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

The number of cases of assistance to persons by the social services department

Board of residence: Western

Types of assistance provided	*1986*	*1987*	*1988–89*	*1989–90*	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*[1]1993–94*
Telephone								
Installations	40	59	70	83	93	82	68	140
Attachments installed	6	4	34	69	3	3	2	1
Rentals	787	668	557	429	613	572	514	441
Other communication equipment installed	13	51	56	3	0	0	15	14
Television								
Installations	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Licence fees or rentals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Radio sets supplied	44	67	151	0	57	0	0	0
Other personal aids	487	447	873	864	[3]772	860	1,165	1,317
Adaptations to private property[2]	92	115	135	153	274	277	333	220
Holidays	103	75	93	76	300	350	400	460

[1] Provisional data.
[2] Does not include adaptations carried out by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.
[3] Foyle unit of management data incomplete.

Long-term Sick and Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the expenditure on cash benefits for the long-term sick and disabled for each year from 1969–70 to 1979–80. [28201]

Mr. Moss: Social security expenditure on the long-term sick and disabled in the years 1973–74 to 1979–80 is given. This information is not available for earlier years.

Year	*£ million*
1973–74	23.4
1974–75	32.6
1975–76	43.0
1976–77	52.9
1977–78	63.9
1978–79	74.9
1979–80	89.0

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the expenditure on personal social services for disabled people in each year since 1970. [28202]

Mr. Moss: In 1992–93 the format of the accounts of the health and social services boards was changed to accommodate health service reforms. The information requested is available from an analysis of these accounts, and the estimated personal social services expenditure on physically and sensorily disabled people was £9.2 million in 1992–93, and £11.3 million in 1993–94. Information on expenditure on the 'equivalent services prior to 1992–93 could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Departmental Performance

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what performance indicators and performance targets there are for measuring the performance of his Department in *(a)* answering letters from members of the public and *(b)* answering telephone calls from members of the public; how performance is monitored; and what are the latest figures for performance measured against the target set. [26233]

Sir John Wheeler: Details of targets and performance regarding correspondence with Ministers is set out in the *Official Report*, 18 April 1995, columns *21-24*. In addition, under the code of practice on open government, the Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments endeavour to respond to requests for information within 20 working days. Details of departmental performance for such requests is detailed in the "Open Government Code of Practice on Access to Government Information 1994 Report", a copy of which has been placed in the Library. The Northern Ireland Office and Northern Ireland Departments, usually at local management level, are responsible for setting their own targets for handling other correspondence and answering

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

telephone queries. The information regarding targets and related performance which is available within Departments is detailed. Where specific targets have not been set, managers have a responsibility to ensure that all public inquiries are dealt with as quickly as possible and telephone calls are dealt with promptly.

Department Economic Development (DED)

Officials endeavour to reply to letters within 15 working days of receipt. Although quantitative measures of DED's performance would incur disproportionate costs, there is no evidence to suggest that this standard is not regularly met.

Two of the targets in the Training and Employment Agency customers charter detail that:

> Customers' letters will be responded to within five working days; where an acknowledgement is issued a full reply should be sent within 10 working days.
>
> Telephones will be answered within 20 seconds, if the person the customer wants is unavailable the call will be returned within one working day.
>
> The latest figures for performance against target indicate that:
>
> 90 per cent. of letters responded to within five working days; of those not responded to within five working days, 85 per cent. were responded to within 10 working days.
>
> 97 per cent. of telephone calls answered within 20 seconds; where a member of staff was not available 90 per cent. of calls were returned within one day.

Department Environment (DOE)

DOE does not have uniform performance targets for handling correspondence and telephone calls. Divisions, services and agencies are encouraged to set their own targets and to publish them in charter statements, as appropriate. Individual targets set for answering correspondence range from five to 15 working days, while telephone queries are normally dealt with on the same day.

Performance monitoring and measurement is carried out by local management and information is not held centrally.

Northern Ireland Office (NIO)

The NIO has no specific targets however, letters from the public are generally answered within a 28-day deadline.

The Compensation Agency aims to reply to at least 95 per cent. of letters within 14 days of receipt, and respond to telephone inquiries on the same day or at most within 24 hours. Performance against these targets is monitored by random sampling and the statistics for 1994–95 indicate that the targets are being achieved.

Department Finance and Personnel (DFP)

DFP does not have uniform performance targets for handling correspondence. Divisions and agencies are encouraged to set their own targets as appropriate. For example, the Civil Service Commission undertakes to respond to all requests for application forms within two working days and to acknowledge receipt of all completed forms within the same timescale.

The Valuation and Lands Agency undertakes to reply to 90 per cent. of enquiries, other than net annual valuations, within 10 days. Current performance is measured at 93 per cent.

With regards to telephone calls the target for switchboard operators to answer calls is 12 seconds. Current performance over the last 12 months is measured at nine seconds.

Department Agriculture (DANI)

Targets for measuring performance of DANI for answering letters and telephone calls are set out in its charter statement "Our Service Standards" published in February 1995, a copy of which will be placed in the Library. Systems are being put in place to monitor performance.

Targets are also set out in the codes of practice governing the legislation enforcement activities of the agri-food development service, the fisheries inspectorate and the veterinary service.

Latest performance figures for these three areas are measured at 96.68 per cent., 100 per cent. and not yet available respectively.

Department Health and Social Services (DHSS)

This Department does not set performance targets for handling correspondence or telephone calls as members of the public do not normally communicate directly with the Department.

In its customer charter, the Social Security Agency aims to respond to all letters of complaint from the public within seven days. There are no specific targets for responding to general letters or telephone calls.

In the NI Child Support Agency's charter the target for answering letters from members of the public is 10 working days and 80 per cent. of telephone calls within 20 seconds. For the year ended March 1995, 42 per cent. of letters checked on a random sample basis received a reply within 10 days and 98 per cent. of telephone calls were answered within 20 seconds.

Department Education (DENI)

DENI has no performance indicators or targets for answering letters and telephone calls from members of the public.

Complaints

Ms Hodge: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what policy and procedure exist for dealing with complaints against his Department by members of the public; when his Department last updated its policy; what time limit and target for dealing with such complaints his Department has; and what follow-up procedure exists where complainants are not satisfied with his Department's response to a complaint. [26217]

Sir John Wheeler: The information requested is as follows:

Department Economic Development (DED)

The detailed procedures governing the handling of complaints varies between the constituent parts of DED, but these are handled promptly at a senior level within each of the organisation. Depending upon the nature of the complaint, it may go to the head of the organisation.

Department Environment (DOE)

DOE does not have a uniform departmental policy and procedure for dealing with complaints from the public. Each division and agency may establish its own policy

and procedure, review it as necessary and set appropriate time limits and targets. Complaints are normally handled by the appropriate level of management with a final right to complain to the head of division, service or agency.

Department Agriculture (DANI)

DANI's policy and procedures for dealing with complaints from the public are set out in its charter statement "Our Service Standards" and the appropriate code of practice governing the legislation enforcement activities of the agri-food development service, the fisheries inspectorate and the veterinary service. The Charter Statement was published in February 1995 and the three enforcement codes of practice were published in February 1994. Copies of all of the documents are available in the Library.

Department Finance and Personnel (DFP)

If a member of the public has a complaint the matter will, in the first instance, be dealt with by the appropriate officer. If the complainant is still not satisfied he or she should write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department who will appoint an independent official in DFP to investigate the complaints and respond to the complainant as expeditiously as possible. In the charter statements the Valuation and Land Agency and the Government purchasing service for Northern Ireland have specified that complaints will be answered within 10 days and 20 days respectively.

DFP last updated its policy in April 1994.

Department Education (DENI)

DENI does not have a formal complaints policy or formal procedures for dealing with complaints against it from members of the public. Time limits and targets have not been set.

Department Health and Social Services (DHSS)

DHSS does not have a corporate policy and procedures for dealing with complaints as members of the public do not normally communicate directly with the Department.

The policy and procedures of the Social Security Agency for dealing with complaints are set out in its customer charter, published July 1992. Copies of the charter are available in the Library.
The agency has recently reviewed its complaints procedures in line with the principles and checklist established for complaints systems by the citizen's charter (Northern Ireland) complaints review group. A programme of initiatives to strengthen the current procedures will be undertaken during 1995–96.

The Northern Ireland Child Support Agency's policy and procedures for dealing with complaints have been in place since the Agency began operating in April 1993. These are well publicised in the agency's charter and business plan both of which are available in the Library. The complaints policy and procedures are currently under review.

The health and personal social services' charter for patients and clients published March 1992 sets out the procedures for dealing with complaints.

Northern Ireland Office

The Northern Ireland Office has no procedures in place for handling complaints from members of the public.

The Northern Ireland Prison Service have a comprehensive complaints and grievance policy for staff and prisoners. Any complaints raised by members of the public are dealt with as they arise by agency management with responsibility for the area of concern. If a complaint is registered by a member of the public in a prison establishment, the governor will respond where the object of complaint is within his area of responsibility or refer to Prison Service headquarters where it is outside his remit.

Complaints to the Compensation Agency may be about the outcome of the applicant's claim or the delivery of service. Any applicant who is dissatisfied with a decision not to pay compensation or with the amount of compensation offered has a statutory right of appeal to the courts. Anyone wishing to make a complaint about the delivery of service may write to the chief executive. The target, which is reviewed annually, is to reply to letters to the chief executive within seven days, or in exceptional circumstances when an interim reply is necessary, within 10 days. The agency undertakes in its charter standard statement to put things right as quickly as possible if there has been a lapse in the standard of service and to give an explanation and an apology to the complainant.

For all NI Departments and the Northern Ireland Office.

Any member of the public who is dissatisfied with the way in which a complaint has been dealt with by the Northern Ireland Departments or the Northern Ireland Office may ask a Member of Parliament to submit their complaint to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration for investigation and review.

Rates

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings in each council district in Northern Ireland have a net annual valuation of under £60; and, of these, how many are occupied by *(a)* tenants, *(b)* owners and how many are vacant. [28196]

Mr. Moss: Responsibility for the subject of the question has been delegated to the Rate Collection Agency under its chief executive, Mr. D. W. Gallagher. I have asked him to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from D. W. Gallagher to Mr. William Ross, dated 12 June 1995:

You asked the Secretary of State how many dwellings in each council district in Northern Ireland have a net annual valuation of under £60 and, of these, how many are occupied by *(a)* tenants, *(b)* owners and *(c)* are vacant.

The information is as set out in the attached table. Since details of tenure are not held for all properties it is impossible to identify how many properties are occupied by tenants. The table relates to the position in February 1995. More up-to-date figures are not available.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

A: The information is as set out in the table. Since details of tenure are not held for all properties it is impossible to identify how many properties are occupied by tenants. The table relates to the position in February 1995. More up-to-date figures are not available.

Properties by district with an NAV under £60

District	*Total number properties*	*Number vacant properties*
Antrim	219	211
Ards	407	266
Armagh	803	771
Ballymena	387	386
Ballymoney	216	198
Banbridge	440	429
Belfast	2,849	1,927
Carrickfergus	143	140
Castlereagh	66	45
Coleraine	418	414
Cookstown	580	562
Craigavon	591	576
Down	543	531
Dungannon	890	879
Fermanagh	1,587	1,499
Larne	316	295
Limavady	409	399
Lisburn	384	371
Derry	491	434
Magherafelt	633	622
Moyle	266	260
Newry and Mourne	998	979
Newtownabbey	183	169
North Down	178	164
Omagh	606	580
Strabane	421	414
Totals	15,024	13,621

Rented Housing

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many dwellings in each council district in Northern Ireland have their rent determined in accordance with regulations 10 and 11(1) of the Housing Benefit (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987. [28197]

Mr. Moss: The information requested is as follows:

District council	*Number of dwellings*
Antrim	109
Ards	91
Armagh	8
Ballymena	17
Ballymoney	11
Banbridge	8
Belfast	596
Carrickfergus	16
Castlereagh	20
Coleraine	13
Cookstown	3
Craigavon	142
Derry	9
Down	12
Dungannon	14
Fermanagh	39
Larne	34
Limavady	1
Lisburn	38
Magherafelt	19
Moyle	1
Newry and Mourne	12
Newtownabbey	86
North Down	52
Omagh	14
Strabane	9
Total	1,374

Mr. William Ross: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list for each council his estimate of the number of occupied dwellings which are subject to the Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978. [28198]

Mr. Moss: It is estimated that between 9,000 and 12,500 properties are subject to the Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 of which 8,339 rents are registered by the Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland). Although figures for the actual number of such properties which are occupied are not available, the number of rents registered, by district council area, are:

District council	*Total*
Antrim	56
Ards	411
Armagh	39
Ballymena	63
Ballymoney	35
Banbridge	30
Belfast	4,593
Carrickfergus	132
Castlereagh	193
Coleraine	100
Cookstown	51
Craigavon	556
Down	58
Dungannon	58
Fermanagh	47
Larne	167
Limavady	17
Lisburn	339
Derry	75
Magherafelt	42
Moyle	16
Newry and Mourne	115
Newtownabbey	778
North Down	305
Omagh	33
Strabane	30
Total	8,339

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

EU Treaty Report

Mr. Cash: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what parliamentary procedure will apply to the report of the Council of Foreign Ministers on the functioning of the treaty on European Union, adopted on 10 April 1995 (Cm 2866) and if it will be undertaken before 1 July. [27761]

Mr. David Davis: The report has been deposited for parliamentary scrutiny with an explanatory memorandum.

Council of Ministers (Vetoes)

Mr. Jenkin: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to the statement by the Minister of State, the hon. Member for Boothferry (Mr. Davis) in European Standing Committee on 24 May, *Official Report*, column 13, if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy on not giving up the United Kingdom's veto; and which vetoes in the Council of Ministers are regarded as not negotiable at the forthcoming intergovernmental conference. [27482]

Mr. David Davis: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minster has made it clear that he will oppose further extension of qualified majority voting.

Intergovernmental Conference

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the preparatory ministerial meeting on the intergovernmental conference to review the Maastricht treaty held in Messina on 2 and 3 June; and if he will place in the Library the submissions made by the United Kingdom to the meeting. [27648]

Mr. David Davis: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Mr. Howarth) on 8 June, *Official Report*, columns *287–88*.

Bosnia

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what efforts are being made by Her Majesty's Government and its partners in UNPROFOR to bring about the demilitarisation of the safe havens in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and if he will make a statement. [28370]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The matter of the safe areas, including their future demilitarisation, is being addressed by the Security Council in its consideration of the latest report on UNPROFOR from the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs which Ministers, former Ministers or civil servants in his Department have sought independent legal advice in assisting their response to draft extracts from Sir Richard Scott's report; in each case from whom the advice has been sought; and what limit has been placed on payment for such advice from public funds. [28389]

Mr. Douglas Hogg *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* Sir Richard Scott has requested that all those in receipt of extracts from his draft report should hold this material in confidence. We are not aware of the identity of all the recipients and, in accordance with the vice-chancellor's request, would not consider it right to disclose the identity of those recipients of whom it is aware.

Apart from legal advice from departmental lawyers, legal services have been provided to witnesses to the inquiry by the Treasury Solicitor's department and by external lawyers. In each case their costs are subject to the approval of the legal advisers to the Departments who are responsible for payment.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Financial Losses

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners what representations the Church Commissioners have received about the need for a full investigation of the losses incurred by their companies and subsidiaries. [27843]

Mr. Alison: The Social Security Select Committee, in its Second Report, Session 1994–95, comments that the growth of the Commissioners' subsidiary companies needs further investigation and we have received a small number of other representations about the use of subsidiary companies. These representations appear to be based on the misconception that subsidiaries were created in order to conceal losses from readers of the Commissioners' unconsolidated accounts. That is quite untrue.

The Commissioners' accounts—whether unconsolidated or, as now, consolidated—have always reflected profits and losses on all their investments, including those held by subsidiaries. I am glad of the opportunity to make that clear and I am arranging for a copy of a detailed letter to the chairman of the Social Security Select Committee clarifying the role of the Commissioners' subsidiaries to be sent to the hon. Member and to be placed in the House of Commons Library.

Reports and Accounts

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners if the Church Commissioners will publish the reports and accounts of their companies and subsidiaries. [27842]

Mr. Alison: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer that I gave to the hon. Member for Newport, West (Mr. Flynn) on 5 December 1994, *Official Report*, column *41*. The accounts of all the Commissioners' subsidiary undertakings are incorporated in the Commissioners' consolidated accounts, published with the annual report and accounts.

The accounts of the UK subsidiary companies are filed at Companies House, where they are available for inspection by members of the public. The Social Security Select Committee has been supplied with a full set of subsidiaries' accounts for the years 1984–1993. I am arranging for a similar set, together with the 1994 accounts, to be placed in the House of Commons Library. Copies are also available for inspection by prior appointment at the Commissioners' offices.

Pensions

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the right hon. Member for Selby, as representing the Church Commissioners (1) if the Commissioners are planning to transfer responsibility to dioceses of all the pension commitments currently met by the Commissioners for *(a)* bishops, *(b)* dignitaries, *(c)* clergy *(d)* lay workers, *(e)* staff at Church house and No. 1 Millbank and *(f)* others. [27436]

(2) on what grounds the Commissioners have decided that future pension liabilities should be transferred to dioceses.

Mr. Alison: Jointly with the Pensions Board and the Central Board of Finance, the Church Commissioners will be submitting a report to the General Synod which proposes that dioceses through funds raised from parishes, raise pension contributions for the future service of parochial clergy and licensed layworkers. The financial impact on parishes will be cushioned through transitional provisions funded by the Commissioners.

This proposal reflects actuarial advice that unless the cost of clergy pensions is shared, the Commissioners' investment income will ultimately be absorbed by the cost

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

of pensions, leaving nothing for their other responsibilities and trusts such as the support of needier parishes and dioceses.

The Commissioners will be responsible for the past service liability of clergy and licensed layworkers, including pensions currently in payment, and for the past and future service liability of dignitaries whose stipends are wholly funded by the Commissioners and of staff employed by the Commissioners.

HEALTH

Extra-statutory Payments

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *409*, what provision she has made for notification of the Comptroller and Auditor General of the £165 million of extra-statutory payments. [26596]

Mr. Malone: The payments will be identified in the individual accounts of family health services authorities for 1994–95 and a note will be included in the national summarised accounts for 1993–94. These accounts are audited by the National Audit Office.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer to the hon. Member for Hertsmere (Mr. Clappison) of 22 May, *Official Report*, column *409*, what was the level of extra-statutory payments relevant to each financial year from 1990–91 to 1994–95; on what date the legal advice was received; what is the date of the most recent guidance note from the NHS executive placed in the Library; and if she make a statement. [26595]

Mr. Malone: The level of expenditure by general practitioner fundholders on management allowances between 1990–91 to 1993–94 was:

1990–91: £6 million
1991–92: £14.1 million
1992–93: £29.5 million
1993–94: £49.5 million

Expenditure figures for 1994–95 have not yet been finalised, but the total sum allocated to family health services authorities amounted to £66 million.

Queries were first raised about the basis of management allowances in the course of routine departmental business in 1991 and 1992, but the implication of the extra-statutory nature of the payments appears not to have been fully recognised until the NHS executive's fundamental review of the fundholding scheme during 1994. The review concluded in December 1994 and health service guideline (94)56, dated 30 December 1994, set out how management allowances would be calculated during 1995–96. Regulations were made in March 1995 to provide statutory authority for payments from 1 April 1995.

Dental Services

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what is the percentage of people aged 10 to 18 years with permanent teeth which are actively decayed, filled or missing due to decay. [27199]

Mr. Malone: The table shows the percentage of children in England aged from 10 to 15 years with permanent teeth which are actively decayed, filled or missing due to decay. Figures for 10 to 18-year-olds are not available. The age group covered by the adult dental health survey is 16 to 24. The results of the 1993 child dental health survey, however, shows substantial improvements, since previous studies in 1983 and 1973, in the number of children who are caries free. For further explanation, I refer the hon. Member to the following Office of Population Censuses and Surveys publications—"Adult Dental Survey", 1988, and "Children's Dental Health in the United Kingdom", 1993. These publications are available in the Library.

Percentage of children aged 10 to 15 years with permanent teeth which are actively decayed, filled or missing due to decay in 1983 and 1993

England

	Age					
Tooth condition	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*	*14*	*15*
Actively decayed						
1983	25	28	30	31	37	40
1993	14	19	22	25	27	27
Filled (otherwise sound)						
1983	45	56	68	71	79	85
1993	16	23	37	40	46	48
Missing due to decay						
1983	5	8	12	14	16	21
1993	3	5	6	5	4	5
Any decay experience						
1983	61	69	79	81	87	92
1993	28	38	50	53	58	60

Source:
Children's Dental Health 1993 OPCS.

London Initiative Zone

Mr. Timms: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how much London initiative zone funding has been *(a)* allocated and *(b)* spent in (i) City and east London, (ii) City and Hackney, (iii) Tower Hamlets and (iv) in total in each year since 1993–94. [27868]

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the table. Under accounting procedures, the final spend position for 1994–95 will not be available until July 1995.

East London and City health authority and City and east London family health services authority—London initiative zone

	Allocation			*Actual spend*		
	Revenue	*Capital*	*Total*	*Revenue*	*Capital*	*Total*
1993–94						
District	631,029	792,241	1,423,270	642,690	805,780	1,448,470
City and Hackney	1,018,987	260,700	1,279,687	1,060,570	260,692	1,321,262
Newham	1,557,000	258,480	1,815,480	1,489,105	248,820	1,737,925
Tower Hamlets	539,126	297,542	836,668	537,551	296,792	834,343
Total	3,746,142	1,608,963	5,355,105	3,729,916	1,612,084	5,342,000

East London and City health authority and City and east London family health services authority—London initiative zone

	Allocation			Actual spend		
	Revenue	*Capital*	*Total*	*Revenue*	*Capital*	*Total*
1994–95						
District	2,277,350	444,500	2,721,850	1,999,240	334,364	2,333,604
City and Hackney	830,300	1,180,707	2,011,007	978,463	914,725	1,893,188
Newham	1,091,000	1,340,000	2,431,000	992,152	1,336,542	2,328,694
Tower Hamlets	1,197,250	902,000	2,099,250	1,011,200	453,927	1,465,127
Total	5,395,900	3,867,207	9,263,107	4,981,055	3,039,558	8,020,613
	The figures for actual payments for 1994–95 are provisional					
1995–96						
District	2,291,250	390,500	2,681,750	—	—	—
City and Hackney	937,150	1,140,000	2,077,150	—	—	—
Newham	1,263,100	3,023,000	4,286,100	—	—	—
Tower Hamlets	1,394,250	985,000	2,379,250	—	—	—
Total	5,885,750	5,538,500	11,424,250	—	—	—

Cancer

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what counselling services are provided under the NHS for patients with cancer; and what is the cost to her Department of those services. [28010]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) what is the annual cost to her Department of specialist cancer services for teenage patients; [28008]

(2) how many health authorities in the United Kingdom provide specialist facilities for teenage cancer patients; [28013]

(3) how many health authorities in the United Kingdom provide specialist counselling for teenage cancer patients. [28012]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally. However, the document "A Policy Framework for Commissioning Cancer Services" recommends that health authorities should look for opportunities for developing the treatment of adolescents with cancer, who present special medical and psychological problems and require specialised care in the cancer centre.

We have also agreed section 64 funding for 1995–96 to support the work of the teenage Cancer Trust a charity committed to raising funds to establish teenage cancer units for the treatment of adolescents suffering from cancer.

Mr. Sheerman: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what percentage of patients with cancer treated under the NHS are teenagers. [28009]

Mr. Sackville: For hospital in-patients in the national health service in 1993–94 in England, teenage cases—13 to 19-year-olds—were 1.7 per cent. of all finished consultant episodes with a main diagnosis of cancer. Information on NHS out-patient clinic cases is not available.

Source: "Hospital Episode Statistics", 25 per cent. sample, diagnostic codes 140-239.

Hospital Building Projects

Mr. Congdon: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list the major hospital building projects in the London borough of Croydon completed since 1978–79 or now under construction or planned giving in each case the completion date and the amount of public money spent, expressed both in cash terms and in terms of today's prices. [28003]

Mr. Sackville: Information on National Health Service building projects costing over £1 million in the London borough of Croydon is shown in the table.

Project	*Completion date*	*Outturn cost £ million*	*Estimated cost at current prices £ million*
Mayday District General Hospital—Main scheme including Maternity	December 1982	16.5	23.6
Mayday District General Hospital—Ante-natal and Post Graduate Medical Centre	April 1985	1.3	1.7
Mayday District General Hospital—Geriatric and Rehabilitation Unit	May 1986	1.6	2.0
Geoffrey Harris House—People with Learning Disabilities Day Centre	January 1992	1.5	1.7
Purley Clinic redevelopment	April 1994	2.4	2.6
Mayday District General Hospital—Accident and Emergency Outpatient redevelopment	[1]December 1995	[1]3.9	—
Waddon Clinic redevelopment[2]	[2]March 1988	[2]1.1	—

[1] Expected.
[2] Provisional.

Surplus Land

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for 1992–93, 1993–94 and 1994–95, the occasions on which her Department has sought prior Treasury approval for the sale of assets in accordance with the Treasury guidelines on the disposal of surplus Government land; and if she will make a statement. [28391]

Mr. Sackville: Records indicate that prior Treasury approval for the sale of assets has only once been sought between April 1992 and March 1995, which was in connection with the sale of Tadworth court to the Children's Trust.

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her answer of 6 June, *Official Report*, column 35, if she will list the procedures adopted by her Department to ensure that in appropriate circumstances a clawback provision is inserted in a rules contract allowing a health authority to obtain a share of any increase in development use; and if she will make a statement. [28461]

Mr. Sackville: The Department circulates procedures regarding land and property transactions through the estatecode series, copies of which are available in the Library. Responsibility for properly managing property transactions rests with individual health authorities.

Edgware General Hospital

Sir John Gorst: To ask the Secretary of State for Health, pursuant to her oral statement of 10 May, *Official Report*, column 785, how many meetings she has had with the Department of Transport to discuss how transport can be improved between Edgware general hospital and other hospitals; and what are the results of those meetings; [28396]

Mr. Sackville: A meeting between officials took place on 23 May and discussions continue.

Occupational Health Staff

Mr. Kirkwood: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many medical and nursing staff worked in occupational health within the national health service for the last three years for which figures are available; and what were the grades of these employees. [28460]

Mr. Malone: The information is shown in the tables.

Table A: Hospital medical staff in occupational health by grade England—30 September 1991, 1992 and 1993 (whole time equivalent)

	1991	1992	1993
Consultant	29	32	34
Staff Grade	2	3	3
Associate Specialist	—	—	—
Senior Registrar	8	8	9
Registrar	4	5	3
Senior House Officer	—	—	—
House officer	—	—	—
Other[1]	26	25	26
Total	69	74	75

[1] Includes hospital practitioners, clinical assistants and other grades.
1. Figures rounded to the nearest whole number.
2. The figures in the table may not sum to the total because of rounding.

Table B: NHS hospital and community health nursing staff (excluding agency) by grade in England at 30 September 1991,1992 and 1993

	1991	1992	1993
Pre-registration Student	20	[1]—	[1]—
Unqualified			
Grade A	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—
Grade B	[1]—	[1]—	[1]—

Table B: NHS hospital and community health nursing staff (excluding agency) by grade in England at 30 September 1991,1992 and 1993

	1991	1992	1993
Qualified			
Grade C	[1]—	10	10
Grade D	20	30	30
Grade E	40	50	50
Grade F	80	80	90
Grade G	240	230	220
Grade H	100	100	90
Grade I	100	100	80
Senior Grade 6	[1]—	[2]—	[2]—
Others	[1]—	10	10
Total	620	600	570

[1] Denotes 5 or less.
[2] Denotes zero value.
1. Figures rounded to the nearest 10.
2. The figures in the table may not sum to the total because of rounding.
3. Senior managers and senior grades 1–5 are not included.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many written parliamentary questions were tabled for answer by her Department in each of the past five years; how many of these were not answered because the information *(a)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, *(b)* was not held centrally and *(c)* was not normally disclosed; how many of these could now be answered due to computerisation, more effective and efficient operational systems or more open government; and if she will list each question along with the name and constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member who originally tabled it. [28523]

Mr. Sackville: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Local Authority Social Services

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list, for each available year since 1970, the number of cases of assistance by local authority social services departments, showing separately for each year *(a)* the number of telephone installations, *(b)* telephone adaptations, *(c)* telephone rentals paid, *(d)* installations of other communications equipment, *(e)* television installations, *(f)* payment of television licences or rentals, *(g)* the number of radio sets provided, *(h)* the number of personal aids provided, *(i)* the number of adaptations to property and *(j)* the number of holidays provided. [28208]

Mr. Bowis: The information requested is available for the years 1973 to 1987 and was published in "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics for England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the expenditure on personal social services for disabled people in each year since 1970. [28210]

Mr. Bowis: The information identified as relating to disabled persons is shown in the table. In addition, other areas of social services spending not specifically identified as being for disabled persons will benefit them as well as other client groups.

Gross expenditure[1] on disabled people 1972–73 to 1993–94, England

£000s

	Residential homes for younger physically disabled	Day and occupational centres	Adaptions to homes	Disability equipment	Total
1972–73	3,652	n/a	1,095	890	n/a
1973–74	5,065	n/a	1,982	1,190	n/a
1974–75	8,909	n/a	2,767	1,829	n/a
1975–76	12,094	n/a	3,475	2,253	n/a
1976–77	14,611	n/a	3,207	2,752	n/a
1977–78	17,977	n/a	3,287	3,358	n/a
1978–79	20,881	n/a	4,070	4,449	n/a
1979–80	25,300	n/a	3,975	4,594	n/a
1980–81	32,085	n/a	4,339	5,172	n/a
1981–82	36,751	n/a	4,817	6,159	n/a
1982–83	42,299	n/a	5,441	7,802	n/a
1983–84	47,437	n/a	6,494	9,326	63,257
1984–85	50,709	n/a	6,895	11,531	69,134
1985–86	45,697	n/a	7,903	12,653	66,252
1986–87	37,384	n/a	10,085	15,421	62,891
1987–88	39,941	40,652	13,387	16,328	110,319
1988–89	46,918	43,902	13,341	17,329	121,490
1989–90	51,794	50,068	14,397	20,401	136,660
1990–91	60,952	54,917	17,929	21,395	155,193
1991–92	63,416	59,979	12,356	24,936	160,687
1992–93	66,012	65,166	12,709	26,501	170,388
1993–94	73,114	66,259	18,366	34,431	192,170

[1] Excluding overhead costs eg for administration and training which cannot be apportioned for the years given.
1. Data for years marked "n/a" are not available.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will provide an estimate of the number of people who have been assisted under the provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 *(a)* in the latest available year and *(b)* since its enactment. [28207]

Mr. Bowis: The Department of Health does not have the information on which to base such an estimate.

Fluoridation

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if her Department will research the practicality of introducing a fluoride sensitivity test; and if she will make a statement. [28466]

Mr. Malone: Validated methods already exist for the investigation of suspected hypersensitivity. Fluoride is a normal component of food, and there is no evidence of allergy of intolerance to fluoride as used in the fluoridation of community water supplies.

NHS Staff Wages

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the average wage increase and what perks have been provided to *(a)* unit executives and *(b)* general and senior managers in the health service in each of the last four years. [26284]

Mr. Malone *[holding answer 25 May 1995]:* Information on the movements in average earnings of these groups of health service staff is not available centrally. For those staff employed on the national terms and conditions for general and senior managers, basic salaries were increased by 6 per cent. in 1991, 3.9 per cent. in 1992, 1.5 per cent. in 1993 and 2.2 per cent. in 1994, with increases effective from 1 September in those years. National health service trusts are free to engage staff on such terms and conditions as they see fit.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Coastal Erosion

Mr. Duffs: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what measures he proposes to review and deal with problems of coastal erosion; and if he will make a statement. [28786]

Mr. Jack: In 1993 the Ministry, in conjunction with the Welsh Office, published the Government's strategy for flood and coastal defence in England and Wales. The strategy sets out a comprehensive policy framework for the Ministry, the Welsh Office and flood and coastal defence authorities to work within while carrying out their responsibilities for flood and coastal defence. To assist authorities, the Ministry and Welsh Office have also produced guidance booklets on project appraisal, environmental best practice and the preparation of shoreline management plans. Copies of all these publications have been placed in the Library of the House.

The Ministry and the Welsh Office have encouraged the formation of coastal groups to consider coastal defence in a strategic manner. Those groups are carrying forward the preparation of shoreline management plans.

In 1994 the Ministry published a comprehensive survey of the state of coast protection work in England. The survey results were sent to the local coast protection authorities in England for them to consider the condition of existing defences and the potential need for defences in their area for unprotected lengths of coastline that are eroding significantly.

The Ministry continues to grant aid capital works proposed by coast protection authorities provided that they are technically sound, economically worthwhile and environmentally acceptable.

Whaling

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the statistics on which calculations in support of whaling were based; and if he will oppose both scientific whaling and whaling carried out on the grounds that the present levels of population justify this activity. [27911]

Mr. Jack: As the Government have frequently stated, the United Kingdom will not even contemplate voting to lift the current moratorium on commercial whaling until stocks are shown to be at healthy levels, fully effective procedures for managing whale stocks are in place which include ways of ensuring that the rules are observed, and methods used to take whales are humane. Management procedures would also need to include rules for conducting surveys and for verifying abundance estimates to ensure that estimates of whale numbers were reliable. As indicated in the reply to the hon. Member for Erewash (Mrs. Knight) on 6 June, *Official Report*, columns *4-6*, this is not always the case with existing estimates. The reply in question also made clear the United Kingdom's opposition to scientific whaling.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will establish an investigation within his Department in regard to the leak of part of the draft of Lord Justice Scott's report which was sent to him. [27652]

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Member for Bradford, West (Mr. Madden) on 12 June, *Official Report*, column *374*.

Infant Nutrition

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the estimated expenditure for 1995 for producing information on infant and young child feeding *(a)* for families and *(b)* for those involved in the field of infant and young child nutrition. [27927]

Mrs. Browning: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the answer that I gave him on 7 June 1995, *Official Report*, columns *211–12*, which indicates that my Department is currently developing a healthy eating booklet in the "Foodsense" series aimed at the mothers of toddlers. My Department is not currently planning further material specifically on infant and young child feeding.

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will make a statement on the application of article 9.1 of EC directive 91/321/EEC on material produced by manufacturers and distributors of infant formula; [27985]

(2) if the word "objective" in article 9.1 of EC directive 91/321/EEC excludes material produced by those with a financial interest in infant feeding. [27924]

Mr. Sackville: I have been asked to reply.

EC directive 91/321/EEC has been implemented in the United Kingdom by the Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula Regulations 1995. A working group set up by the Department of Health is formulating guidance covering the content, planning and design of material described in article 9.1 to help make sure that, regardless of its source, such material contains objective and consistent information.

Food Labelling

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what plans he has to label *(a)* genetically modified food, *(b)* meat treated with hormones and *(c)* the country of origin for meat and meat products and if he will make a statement. [26660]

Mrs. Browning: A draft regulation on novel foods and novel food ingredients, currently before the Council of Ministers in Brussels, would, if adopted, require the labelling of genetically modified food in certain circumstances.

The Government have accepted the advice of the Food Advisory Committee that there should be no additional labelling requirements for meat derived from animals treated with hormones.

Under EC labelling rules, the place of origin or provenance of a food must be given on food labels in cases where failure to give such particulars might mislead the consumer to a material degree. Furthermore, there is no legal impediment to giving this information voluntarily, provided it is true and non-misleading. I know of no proposals in the EU to alter this situation.

Farmers (Early Retirement)

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if EU proposals for early retirement schemes for farmers apply to pig farmers; and if he will make a statement. [25743]

Mr. Jack: Council regulation No. 2079/92 provides for early retirement schemes for farmers but does not differentiate between types of farming. The regulation does not require member states to set up early retirement schemes and because the terms are not appropriate to the conditions of agriculture in the Untied Kingdom we have not done so.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Desertification

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list current programmes which assist in combating desertification and the spending on these programmes in each of the last three years. [28015]

Mr. Baldry: We do not have this information readily available partly because of the difficulty of clearly defining such programmes. The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate costs.

Jakarta

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 10 January, *Official Report*, column *14*, to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), what was the date of the fire at the central radio studios in Jakarta; and what radio stations broadcast from those studios. [28329]

Mr. Baldry: The fire at the central radio studios in Jakarta occurred in July 1985.

The state radio network, Radio Republic Indonesia, broadcasts from the studios re-equipped under the aid and trade provision project. A typical day's programmes consists of national news broadcasts, educational and cultural programmes and local events. These programmes are broadcast nationally on short and medium wave, and on FM in the Jakarta area.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if the Indonesian electricity authority has now awarded the equipment supply contract for the Samarinda power station and the contract for the associated transmission line referred to in his answer to the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) of 7 February 1994, *Official Report*, column *68;* what are the names of the British and Indonesian companies involved; what will be the generating capacity of the power station; what will be the geographical area within east Kalissantan to be served by the power station; and what proportion of the power generated will be for domestic consumption and what proportion will be for commercial consumption. [27913]

Mr. Baldry: A contract was awarded by the Indonesian Electricity Authority in March 1995 to Parsons Turbine Generators Ltd. for the supply of power station equipment. In May 1995 PLN awarded a contract for the associated transmission line to a consortium comprising of PT Pauwels Arya Sada Contracting and Clough Smith Ltd.

When fully operational the generating capacity of the plant will be approximately 60 mW. Power will be supplied to the Samarinda and Balikpapan districts. The March 1989 feasibility study forecast that 14 per cent. of the energy generated would be for residential consumption, with the remainder going to commercial and industrial users.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *704*, to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), regarding the Indonesian tropical forest management project: sub 1, what are the locations of the main lowland Dipterocarp forests affected by the project; if he will name the senior policy makers advised under the project; what are their positions within the Ministry of Forestry or provincial forestry services; and who the Government engaged to provide advice under the project. [27831]

Mr. Baldry: The main lowland Dipterocarp forests affected are in Kalimantan and Sumatera. The senior policy makers involved with the project in the Ministry of Forestry are: the Minister of Forestry (Ir Djamaludin Soeryohadikosumo); the Minister's Policy Advisers (Ir Triyono, Ir Roedjai, Ir Ari Soedarsono, Ir Armana Darsidi, Dr. Soekardjo); the Director-General of Forest Utilisation (Ir Titus Sarijanto); and the Secretary-General (Ir Oetomos). We have engaged LTS International Ltd. to provide advice.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *704*, to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) regarding the Indonesian tropical forest management project: sub 3, who is being engaged by the Government to carry out the project. [28732]

Mr. Baldry: The Ministry of Forestry is implementing the project. We have engaged LTS International Ltd. to provide advice.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *704*, to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) regarding the Indonesian tropical management project: sub 5, who the Government engaged to carry out the project. [27834]

Mr. Baldry: The project is being implemented by the directorate general of forest protection and nature conservation. We have engaged LTS International Ltd. with the Asian Wetland Bureau to provide advice.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *704*, to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor) regarding the implementation of conservation programme-Irian Jaya, joint funding scheme, if he will name the British non-government organisations involved in the programme. [27835]

Mr. Baldry: The NGO was the World Wide Fund for Nature.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *704*, to the hon. Member for Eccles, (Miss Lestor) regarding the Indonesian tropical forest management project: sub 2, what provinces in Indonesia are covered by the project; and who is being engaged by the Indonesian Government to carry out the project. [27836]

Mr. Baldry: Central Kalimantan, Jambi and Riau provinces are covered by sub-project 2 (provincial management).

The project is being implemented by the Provincial Forest Services, guided by the Ministry of Forestry regional offices in each province. We have engaged LTS International Ltd. to provide advice.

Mrs Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *704*, to the hon. Member for Eccles, (Miss Lestor) regarding the radio communications system for the Ministry of Forestry in Indonesia, if he will list the nine provinces in which integrated radio communications networks and associated facilities are being installed. [27837]

Mr. Baldry: The integrated radio communications network and associated facilities were installed at the Ministry of Forestry's headquarters in Jakarta and in the following provinces:

The four Kalimantan provinces known as Selatan, Tangah, Barat and Timur, and:

North Sumatera

South Sumatera

Riau, Sumatera

North Sulawesi

South Sulawesi

Mrs Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 11 May, *Official Report*, column *584*, if he will give the exact date on which full and formal appraisal documents were submitted by the Overseas Development Administration and the Department of Trade and Industry in respect of the aid and trade provision support for the

offshore supply vessels project; and by whom the appraisals were undertaken. [28191]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The Department of Trade and Industry's appraisal document was completed in May 1984 and that for the Overseas Development Administration in June 1984. Each appraisal was conducted by officials of the relevant department. The ODA obtained additional advice from technical staff of the Crown Agents for overseas Governments and Administrations and from staff of the British Council on the training aspects.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many dwellings were built by Welsh local authorities in each of the last five years. [28447]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Information on the number of local authority dwellings completed from 1990 up to 1993 has been published in table 2.3 of "Welsh Housing Statistics", No. 14 1994, a copy of which is in the Library of the House. In 1994, the number of new dwellings completed by local authorities in Wales was 227.

Homelessness

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many Welsh households are classified as homeless. [28445]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The latest figure available is 2,131—for the quarter ending December 1994—and this represents a decrease of 13 per cent. on the same quarter in 1993.

Source: local authority returns

Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the members of the Welsh Industrial Advisory Development Board, giving the date their appointment commenced and their length of tenure. [28244]

Mr. Redwood: Information on all appointments made by me is available in the Library of the House.

Population

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the Welsh population is *(a)* under the age of 16 years and *(b)* 65 years of age or more. [28441]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The 1993 mid-year estimate for Wales shows that the percentages of the population aged *(a)* under 16 years was 20.7 per cent., and *(b)* 65 years or more was 17.3 per cent.

Coastal Erosion

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what measures he proposes to review and deal with problems of coastal erosion in Wales; and if he will make a statement. [26787]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: In 1993, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in conjunction with the Welsh Office, published the Government's strategy for flood and coastal defence in England and Wales. The strategy set out a comprehensive policy framework for the Ministry, the Welsh Office and coastal defence authorities to work within while carrying out their responsibilities for flood and costal defence. To assist authorities, the Ministry and Welsh Office have also produced guidance booklets on project appraisal, environmental best practice and the preparation of shoreline management plans. Copies of all these publications have been placed in the Library of the House.

The Welsh Office and the Ministry have encouraged the formation of coastal groups to consider coastal defence in a strategic manner. Those groups are carrying forward the preparation of shoreline management plans. In conjunction with the preparation of these plans, the Welsh Office is updating its 1982 survey of coast protection in Wales, which will provide a comprehensive view of the state of the coastline, the condition of existing defences and the potential need for defences in areas where there is a coastal erosion.

The Welsh Office continues to grant aid capital works proposed by coast protection authorities provided they are technically sound, economically worthwhile and environmentally acceptable.

Foreign Languages

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 22 March, *Official Report*, column 255, if he will provide a list of languages other than English *(a)* which he understands and *(b)* in which he signs letters. [27912]

Mr. Redwood: Spanish and French.

Asthma

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the expenditure on general practitioner prescribed anti-asthma medication and preparations in each family health services authority area in Wales, for the last three years for which figures are available; and what was the expenditure per head. [27838]

Mr. Redwood: The information is as follows:

Family health services authority	*Expenditure per head £*			*Total expenditure £ million*
	1992	*1993*	*1994*	
Clwyd	6.66	7.84	8.90	2.763
Gwynedd	7.14	8.43	9.76	1.710
Powys	7.00	6.34	8.72	0.834
Dyfed	8.15	9.27	10.50	2.860
West Glamorgan	8.19	9.57	10.51	3.039
South Glamorgan	7.65	8.60	8.56	3.138
Mid Glamorgan	8.68	9.89	11.36	4.711
Gwent	6.80	7.88	8.88	3.058

The figures show expenditure on bronchodilators, inhaled corticosteroids, cromoglycate and related therapy. Some of these preparations are prescribed for indications other than asthma.

Information concerning total expenditure for 1993 and 1994 was given in my reply to the hon. Member of 7 June, *Official Report*, column 257.

Local Authority Social Services

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list, for each available year since 1970, the number of cases of assistance by local authority social

services departments, showing separately for each year *(a)* the number of telephone installations, *(b)* telephone adaptions, *(c)* telephone rentals paid, *(d)* installations of other communications equipment, *(e)* television installations, *(f)* payment of television licenses or rentals, *(g)* the number of radio sets provided, *(h)* the number of other personal aids provided, *(i)* the number of adaptions to property and *(j)* the number of holidays provided. [28205]

Mr. Richards: The information requested is available from 1975 and is given in the following table.

Assistance provided by local authority social services departments in Wales[1]

Year ending 31 March	*Telephone installations*	*Telephone adaptions*	*Telephone rentals paid*	*Installations of other communications equipment*	*Television installations*	*Payment of television licences or rentals*	*Radio sets provided*	*Other personal aids provided*	*Adaptions to property*	*Holidays provided*
Households receiving assistance:										
1975	1,274	41	2,258	35	242	561	216	9,405	2,238	1,757
1976	837	46	4,802	132	87	2,036	235	10,974	2,560	1,796
1977	368	15	5,321	164	1	1,967	223	9,903	2,533	1,615
1978	827	23	5,195	120	22	1,779	165	12,709	2,751	1,,406
1979	1,284	46	5,350	204	23	1,517	184	15,276	3,231	1,592
Cases of assistance:										
1980	1,438	71	6,893	220	24	1,304	103	12,772	1,872	3,721
1981	847	20	4,026	174	10	246	115	15,656	944	3,255
1982	999	64	3,933	123	4	231	178	16,232	1,781	3,175
1983	911	281	5,511	139	9	281	105	18,031	2,639	3,383
1984	1,532	292	6,921	113	6	158	130	25,495	3,585	3,427
1985	1,335	280	7,780	132	3	126	143	22,250	3,741	3,433
1986	1,559	308	8,719	291	4	141	131	23,280	4,521	3,469
1987	1.603	405	9,688	502	39	149	133	23,755	4,733	3,503
1988	1,138	257	9,897	503	1	87	114	23,942	5,967	3,379
1989	1,527	442	10,386	529	1	117	126	25,790	5,547	3,265
1990	1,390	680	10,299	706	—	142	112	24,475	6,719	3,279
1991	1,247	760	10,490	696	2	112	161	25,635	7,241	3,124
1992	1,360	880	10,483	564	—	105	197	27,272	8,361	3,211
1993	1,234	756	10,569	880	1	95	200	26,973	9,943	3,376
1994	1,165	[3]3,549	10,396	1,277	2	92	159	34,111	8,918	2,581

[1] Data for the period 1975 to 1979 relates to the number of households receiving assistance. Data for the period 1980 to 1994 relate to the number of cases of assistance.
The figures are therefore not comparable.
[2] Includes installation of connections to community alarm systems.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what has been the expenditure on personal social services for disabled people in each year since 1970. [28206]

Mr. Richards: The available information is given in the following table. Information was not collected on the same basis prior to 1987–88.

Gross local authority expenditure on personal social services for physically and/or sensorily disabled adults[1]

	£000s
1987–88	5,257
1988–89	5,301
1989–90	6,286
1990–91	7,087
1991–92	6,276
1992–93	6,574
1993–94	10,381

Note:

[1]Includes expenditure on homes, including those for the blind and deaf, day and occupational centres, adaptations to homes and disability equipment. Excludes expenditure on the elderly. Gross expenditure equals expenditure on employees, running expenses and joint arrangements less local income other than sales, fees and charges.

Source:

Local authority returns.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

China

17. **Mr. Dykes:** To ask the president of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on his recent trade mission to the People's Republic of China; and if he will list the increase in United Kingdom export orders arising from the mission. [26820]

Mr. Heseltine: The mission to China was an outstanding commercial success. It was the latest trade mission to leave the United Kingdom. The 130 companies which participated had a combined turnover well in excess of £75 billion.

My discussions with senior Chinese leaders confirmed the enormous potential for British business in China.

Companies signed over £1 billion of business in the lead up to and during the mission. I have arranged for a detailed list to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

National Lottery

22. **Mr. Waterson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with Post Office Counters Ltd. about safeguards to protect those Post Office employees who object on religious grounds to selling national lottery tickets or scratch cards; and if he will make a statement. [26827]

Mr. Page: The relationship between the Post Office and its employees is a matter for the board.

Domestic Gas Supplies

23. **Mr Spearing:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what requirements he will place on the supplies of gas to domestic premises under the terms of the Gas Bill to ensure the maintenance of service standards formerly established by British Gas. [26828]

Mr. Eggar: The Gas Bill provides the legislative framework for the introduction of competition to the supply of gas to domestic consumers. In a competitive market, standards of services will be a matter for competition between suppliers. Customers will be able to choose the supplier who offers the service they require.

However, all gas suppliers will be required to provide special services to older and disabled customers. These will be the same as, and in some areas extend, the current requirements placed on British Gas. Suppliers will also be required to follow procedures to help customers who have genuine difficulties paying their bills. The proposed provisions are set out in the draft "Standard Conditions of the Gas Suppliers' Licence", published on 20 March, a copy of which has been placed in the Library of the House.

The level and extent of British Gas's current 39 regulated service standards, which are linked to the price formula, will be considered when that formula is reviewed by Ofgas, with effect from 1997.

Electricity Generation

24. **Mr. Alan W. Williams:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he intends taking to develop further competition in electricity generation. [26830]

Mr. Eggar: This is primarily a matter for the independent regulator—the Director General of Electricity Supply—who is responsible for overseeing the operation of the electricity market.

Lloyd's

25. **Mr. Hanson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the chief executive of Lloyd's about future prospects for Lloyd's; and if he will make a statement. [26831]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I have regular meetings with the chairman of Lloyd's to discuss developments in the Lloyd's market. I am aware of Lloyd's proposals for restructuring the market. My Department will examine the regulatory issues arising from the proposals, including the authorisation of the proposed Equitas company, over the coming months. Subject to the regulatory requirements being satisfied, I believe that the plan provides the prospect of a comprehensive solution to many of the problems faced by Lloyd's in the interests of both policyholders and members of Lloyd's.

Regional Assistance

26. **Sir Teddy Taylor:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the regional aids and subsidies his Department is able to award without the permission of the Commission of the European Union. [26832]

Mr. Eggar: The only regional aid for which DTI is wholly responsible is regional selective assistance. The terms and operation of this have been approved by the Commission, leaving the Department to use its discretion to ensure that support is targeted at the selected areas and to the maximum advantage to the United Kingdom. Only cases in certain sensitive sectors, such as motor vehicles or synthetic fibres, require individual approval.

Industrial Performance

27. **Mr. Hain:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the average rate of return produced by British industry. [26833]

Mr. Eggar: In 1993, the last year for which figures are available, the net rate of return on capital employed by industrial and commercial companies was 8.4 per cent. higher than at the comparable point in the two previous recoveries.

Science and Technology

28. **Dr. Lynne Jones:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what discussions he has had with the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster about the recommendations of the second report of the Select Committee on Science and Technology of Session 1994–95, "Forward Look Science and Technology"; and if he will make a statement. [26834]

Mr. Heseltine: The Government published a full response to the recommendations of the Science and Technology Select Committee on the "Forward Look", in March 1995. In preparing the Government response, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had discussions with other Departments, including DTI, concerning the recommendations in their relevant areas of responsibility.

Aerospace Industry

29. **Mr. Pike:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the importance of the aerospace industry to the United Kingdom manufacturing sector. [26835]

Mr. Heseltine: The aerospace industry accounted for 4 per cent. of United Kingdom manufacturing turnover in 1992. My Department has commissioned two studies on the diffusion of aerospace technology and skills to other sectors. Copies of these reports will be placed in the Libraries of the House. In addition officials are studying the profitability of the United Kingdom aerospace industry.

Manufacturing Industry

30. **Sir David Knox:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he next expects to meet the President of the Confederation of British Industry to discuss manufacturing industry. [26836]

Mr. Heseltine: I am meeting the President of the Confederation of British Industry on 21 June to discuss a range of issues. In 1995 the CBI expects manufacturing output to grow by more than 4 per cent. and manufacturing investment to grow by more than 10.5 per cent. Recent CBI surveys show export orders growing faster than ever before and export optimism at its highest level for a generation.

Inward Investment

31. **Dr. Spink :** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment he has made of current levels of inward investment. [26837]

Mr. Eggar: Balance of payments data show that between 1986 and 1993, the last year for which figures are available, inward direct investment into the United Kingdom rose from £52 billion to nearly £131 billion. We now have about a third of the stock of direct inward investment in the EU. Our share of the stock of US investment in the EU was nearly 43 per cent. in 1993 and our share of the cumulative flows of Japanese investment into the EU was nearly 41 per cent.

The UK is now the preferred location in Europe for inward investment and I am determined that it should remain so.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on inward investment and on the consultation which he undertakes with industry prior to taking decisions to award investment grants. [26884]

Mr. Eggar: The Government continue to attach great importance to the attraction of inward investment. Investment grants are available for projects in the assisted areas under the regional selective assistance scheme. No decision is taken to offer RSA grant without fully considering the potential impact of the project on existing businesses in the sector concerned.

Rural Economy

32. **Mr. Colvin:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what contributions his Department are making to the proposals in the forthcoming White Paper on the rural economy. [26838]

Mr. Heseltine: Officials in my Department are in close contact with the White Paper team and have been working with them to ensure that the interests of businesses in rural areas are fully represented.

North American Free Trade Area

33. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to expand bilateral trade with members of the north American free trade area; and if he will make a statement. [26840]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The United Kingdom Government maintain a vigorous trade promotion programme with respect to members of NAFTA. With the European Commission and the US Administration and others we are looking at various ways of further liberalising trade both across the north Atlantic and more generally to act as pathfinders within the World Trade Organisation.

Overseas Trade (Commission)

34. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what rules his Department require should govern commissions on trade overseas. [26841]

Mr. Ian Taylor: None. Commissions are a matter for the companies concerned within the appropriate legal system.

Utility Customer Service Committees

35. **Mrs. Helen Jackson:** To ask the President of the Board of Trade what steps he is taking to ensure that utility customer service committees represent the views of local consumers. [26842]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Responsibility for the effective representation of consumers of the electricity and water industries rests with the Director General of Electricity Supply and the Director General of Water Services through appointments to the electricity consumers' committees and the water customer services committees.

Space Industry

Mr. Brandeth: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the results of the recent study into the United Kingdom space industry. [29066]

Mr. Taylor: The major findings of the study undertaken on behalf of the British National Space Centre showed that in 1993–94 total industry turnover was estimated at £710 million. This compared to £530 million in 1991–92. United Kingdom space-related employment stood at 6,360 compared to 6,140 in 1991–92. Over the last five years the UK space industry has shown growth in sales of 9 per cent. per year. A number of sub-sectors have shown annual growth rates over 10 per cent. and the emerging earth observation data value-added sub-sector has shown growth rates of 34 per cent. of turnover and 37 per cent. in work force.

Investment

Mrs. Anne Campbell: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what proposals his Department has to curb short-termism as regards industrial investment. [26829]

Mr. Heseltine: A stable macroeconomic environment based on low inflation and improved relations between providers of finance and industry are the best ways to promote long-term investment.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Colvin: To ask the President of the Board of Trade at what rate funding for renewables under the non-fossil fuel obligation will continue when the nuclear industry is privatised. [27002]

Mr. Llew Smith: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make a statement on the future availability of the non-fossil fuel levy to support renewable energy technology. [27134]

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend and the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Nottingham, South (Mr. Simpson) on 8 June 1995, *Official Report*, columns *268-69*.

Mr. Simpson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what assessment his Department has made of the costs of the decommissioning of nuclear power stations. [27133]

Mr. Eggar: The costs of decommissioning nuclear power stations are a matter for their operators.

Overseas Relocations

Mr. Flynn: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what new proposals he has to reduce the numbers of British firms relocating overseas. [26821]

Mr. Eggar: None. Decisions on where to invest are a commercial matter for the companies concerned. The United Kingdom remains an attractive location for investment, for both British and foreign firms.

Human and Animal Tissue Protocol

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the Government will take action to implement the recommendations of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics report on human tissue regarding the adoption of a protocol to the European patent convention to set out the criteria to be used by national courts when applying the immorality exclusion to patents in the area of human and animal tissue. [28457]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The suggestion in the Nuffield Council on Bioethics report for a protocol to the European patent convention on the interpretation of the morality exclusion is interesting. However, as the report recognises, reaching agreement among all member states on such a protocol could be very time consuming. The European Commission is reflecting on how to deal with the rejection of the proposed EC directive on the legal protection of biotechnological inventions by the European Parliament and it is expected that they will come forward with a new proposal in the near future. In the light of this, a separate initiative among contracting states of the convention would not be appropriate at the present time.

Genetic Material

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many patents have been issued in the United Kingdom by the Patent Office and how many by the European Patent Office valid in the United Kingdom incorporating genetic material of plant origin or derivation. [28456]

Mr. Ian Taylor: A search of electronic databases using classification terms shows that some 250 patent applications published by the European Patent Office and the United Kingdom Patent Office relate to genetic material of plant origin or derivation. Each application would have to be checked individually to ascertain whether it has resulted in a patent valid in the United Kingdom, which would involve disproportionate cost.

Mr. Morley: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many patents have been issued in the United Kingdom by the Patent Office and how many by the European Patent Office valid in the United Kingdom incorporating genetic material of human origin or derivation. [28455]

Mr. Ian Taylor: A search of electronic databases using classification terms and key words show that some 1,540 patent applications published by the European Patent Office and the United Kingdom Patent Office relate to genetic material of human origin or derivation. Each application would have to be checked individually to ascertain whether it has resulted in a patent valid in the United Kingdom, which would involve disproportionate cost.

Newspapers

Sir David Steel: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what plans he has to instruct the Monopolies and Mergers Commission to commence an inquiry into the principle of carriage charges for newspapers. [28169]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: This is a matter for the Director General of Fair Trading who, under the competition legislation, is responsible for keeping markets under review, and has independent powers to make a reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Patent Office

Mr. Touhig: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what detailed criteria and what organisation will be used in bench marking activities when comparing sections in the Patent Office for contractorisation. [28068]

Mr. Ian Taylor: In areas identified as candidates for contractorisation, bids for managing contracted-out services will be evaluated against benchmarks for the forecast cost and quality of service from in-house provision. Detailed criteria will depend on the activity under consideration and will be decided upon when specifications are drawn up.

Mr. Touhig: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if the activities under consideration for contracting out in the Patent Office would require an order under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act 1994. [28072]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Current expectations are that the activities which will be considered for contracting out would not require an order under the Deregulation and Contracting Out Act.

Mr. Touhig: To ask the President of the Board of Trade who will be responsible for preparing management or staff bids, for the Patent Office contractorisation; and what will be done to train and prepare staff for this role. [28070]

Mr. Ian Taylor: Under contracting out, staff are free at their own initiative to mount a bid alongside the private sector, but if successful would cease to be civil servants. Preparation and organisation of such bids would be a matter for the staff themselves. The Patent Office would make reasonable time available within working hours but would not lend more active support. All bids will be compared against a benchmark of the service remaining in the civil service which incorporates identified future efficiency savings and quality of service indicators. Only if the bidders demonstrate better value for money to the taxpayer will the work be moved outside the public sector.

Mr. Touhig: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what are the sections under consideration in the Patent Office for contractorisation, and the number of staff involved. [28069]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Patent Office is being encouraged to contract out activities wherever this is compatible with its statutory role and good value for money. Whether any particular activity is considered as a candidate for contractorisation will depend on operational requirements, which are being assessed.

In the case of marketing and the London Front Office, which might in principle be contractorised subject to value for money criteria, current activities are carried out by some 35 staff.

Mr. Touhig: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will make it his policy to ensure that jobs affected by contractorisation of the Patent Office will remain in south Wales. [28074]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The location of jobs relating to contracted out services will be a matter for the contractor.

Mr. Touhig: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the time-scale involved for contractorisation of Patent Office functions. [28071]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The time-scale for contractorisation of Patent Office functions will depend on operational requirements which are currently being assessed by officials.

Fire Safety

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when the results of the inter-departmental review of fire safety legislation will be published. [27959]

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave to the right hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mr. Beith) on 24 May 1995, *Official Report*, column *643*.

AST Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will set up an inquiry into the collapse of the AST Group and its acquisition of the assets of the ASTRA Training Company plc in October 1993, and the transfer of those assets into Firlands Training Ltd in March 1995. [28309]

Mr. Jonathan Evans *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* I understand that none f the companies mentioned is subject to a winding-up order. Until a company is in compulsory liquidation the Official Receiver cannot exercise his statutory powers of investigation into its affairs.

Under section 7 of the Company Directors Disqualification Act, 1986 the voluntary liquidator has a duty to report any matters of conduct on the part of the directors which he considers makes them unfit to take part in the management of limited companies. In these cases the liquidator has not yet reported, which he is required to do within six months of the liquidation. I can give an assurance that those reports, together with other relevant information will be carefully considered to see whether proceedings should be brought against any individuals concerned in the liquidation of companies within the AST Group.

In addition the Secretary of State has discretionary powers of investigation into a company where there are grounds to suspect fraud, misfeasance or serious misconduct. Officials within the investigation division of my Department will consider whether the information provided constitutes the "good reason" required before I can exercise my discretionary powers to authorise an investigation.

CS Gas

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade, pursuant to his answer of 30 March, *Official Report*, columns *776–77*, if no licences have been granted for the export to Indonesia of CS gas cartridges, CS gas grenades or other crowd control technologies since 1 January 1985. [27792]

Mr. Ian Taylor *[holding answer 17 June 1995]:* I have nothing further to add to the statement of 30 March 1995.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the President of the Board of Trade on what date he or other Ministers or former Ministers in his Department received extracts for comment from Sir Richard Scott's draft report; on what date comments were submitted to Sir Richard; and what requests have been made for an extension of the period within which comments should have been made. [27552]

Mr. Heseltine *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The Government do not disclose details of correspondence between the inquiry and individual witnesses. In the case of draft extracts in particular, the inquiry has asked that these be treated in strictest confidence.

SCOTLAND

Sandeels

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what account he took, in arranging the initiative to manage the Shetland sandeel fishery, of the announcement on 16 May by the Environment Secretary that measures be taken to control the wider North sea industrial fishery as a priority for the North sea ministerial conference. [27122]

Sir Hector Monro: The decision to re-open the Shetland sandeel fishery predated the announcement on 16 May by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment. The Government had already taken the view that there was no relevant correlation between the large-scale Danish fishery in the North sea, which accounts for between 1 million and 2 million tonnes of sandeel per annum, and the very much smaller UK fishery at Shetland which will probably account for less than 3,000 tonnes of sandeel this year.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what the annual cost of public funds has been in terms of research, monitoring and supervision, for the management of the Shetland sandeel fishery. [27120]

Sir Hector Monro: Between 1990–91 and 1995–96, the average annual cost to public funds for research, monitoring and supervision connected with the sandeel fisheries has been £117,000. This covers the sampling of landings, research vessel surveys, and stock assessment work, but excludes academic research contracts jointly funded with other bodies. A breakdown for the Shetland sandeel fishery in particular is not available. However, a reasonable estimate is about 80 per cent. of the total, or £93,000 per annum.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what consideration the Government gave when allowing sandeel fishing in Mousa Sound, Shetland, to its inclusion in the list of proposed special areas of conservation because of its importance for common seals; [27110]

(2) within what distance of special protection areas for sea birds in Shetland sandeel fishing is permitted; [27111]

(3) what action the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department has taken to establish areas closed to sandeel fishing around Shetland's internationally important seabird colonies. [27123]

Sir Hector Monro: The Government gave due consideration to their obligations under the European Community directives on the conservation of wild birds and on the conservation of natural habitats and wild flora and fauna before deciding to re-open the Shetland sandeel fishery. In terms of these directives, member states must take appropriate steps to ensure that there is no deterioration of the habitat types or significant disturbance to the species for which areas are designated as European sites. We were satisfied, on the evidence received, that the limited fishery would not have any of these impacts, whether on sea birds or on the common seal at Mousa Sound. No closed areas have therefore been introduced.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what steps the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department takes to ensure that the management of fisheries does not conflict with the Government's international commitments to the conservation of flora and fauna; [27114]

(2) what action the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department will take if monitoring Shetland's seabird population demonstrates low survival of chicks or shortages of food. [27116]

Sir Hector Monro: As set out in the United Kingdom's sustainable development strategy, the Government are committed to promoting fisheries policies which take proper account of the environmental impact of fishing. We therefore take due account of relevant international commitments, and retain statutory powers to act where appropriate, as under the Inshore Fishing (Scotland) Act 1984 and the Sea Fish (Conservation) Act 1967. These Acts provide the power, if necessary, to close or otherwise regulate the Shetland sandeel fishery. Any such statutory arrangements would then be enforced in the normal manner through the Scottish Fisheries Protection Agency.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) where fishing for sandeels has been taking place around Shetland since the fishery was re-opened; [27117]

(2) how many boats have been licensed to fish for sandeels *(a)* around Shetland and *(b)* on the west coast of Scotland in 1995. [27118]

Sir Hector Monro: Eight vessels have been licensed to fish at Shetland, and four on the west coast of Scotland. The former have concentrated their fishing around the north and north-west of the island of Mousa.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the role of the Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Department in negotiating an integrated package of management instruments for the Shetland sandeel fishery; and what considerations underlie the extent to which the management option of closed areas is delegated to voluntary agreement between Scottish Natural Heritage on the one hand and the Shetland Fishermen's Association on the other; [27115]

(2) what evidence he has that the recently re-opened Shetland sandeel fishery is sustainable; [27109]

(3) what advice Scottish Natural Heritage has given him on the closure of areas to sandeel fishing around seabird colonies in Shetland. [27112]

Sir Hector Monro: Following public consultation, the Government have established a framework of rigorous management controls to ensure that the Shetland sandeel fishery operates in a sustainable manner. We have set a total allowable catch of 3,000 tonnes. This represents less than 10 per cent. of the spawning stock biomass, is well within the safe biological limits for such species, and is less than the loss by natural predation. In addition, we have restricted access to small, licensed boats, have limited the season, and have stipulated a single landing point in Lerwick to aid enforcement. In view of this tight framework, we concluded that there was no need for statutory closed areas and have therefore provided for these as an optional management regime. As the Secretary of State's statutory adviser on nature conservation matters, Scottish Natural Heritage is an appropriate focal point for such voluntary liaison with local interests, in this instance the Shetland Fishermen's Association. Although it would have preferred formal closed areas, SNH welcomed our precautionary approach and expressed themselves willing to work closely with those concerned.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland on how many occasions sample trawls were taken to assess the state of the 1995 Shetland sandeel stock. [27113]

Sir Hector Monro: The Shetland sandeel stock assessment for the 1995 season was undertaken in August 1994 and involved a total of 48 sample trawls.

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the value of the Shetland sandeel fishery in 1995. [27119]

Sir Hector Monro: At current market prices, the total allowable sandeel catch of 3,000 tonnes would fetch about £138,000. This excludes the added value derived from the associated processing and marketing. These benefits will accrue mainly to the local economy in Shetland itself.

Accident Statistics

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the accident statistics for each stretch of the A76 on comparable basis with the A77, A74 and A96 over the past four years. [27376]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is as follows:

Route: A76
Section: Dumfries to Marchburn
Length Kms.: 53.03

	Personal injury accidents				*Section accident*
Year	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*	*rate*
1991	2	17	35	54	0.47
1992	2	7	19	28	0.25
1993	4	14	27	45	0.39
1994	2	14	20	36	0.32

Route: A76
Section: Marchburn to Kilmarnock
Length Kms.: 36.86

	Personal injury accidents				*Section accident*
Year	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*	*rate*
1991	1	11	27	39	0.50
1992	3	9	22	34	0.43
1993	2	5	12	19	0.24
1994	2	3	18	23	0.29

Route: A76
Section: Dumfries to Kilmarnock (whole trunk road)
Length Kms.: 89.89

	Personal injury accidents				*Section accident*
Year	*Fatal*	*Serious*	*Slight*	*Total*	*rate*
1991	3	28	62	93	0.48
1992	5	16	41	62	0.32
1993	6	19	39	64	0.33
1994	4	17	38	59	0.31

Route: A77
Section: Stranraer to Ayr
Length Kms.: 83.18

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	3	19	33	55	0.37
1992	6	24	47	77	0.51
1993	3	18	39	60	0.40
1994	0	26	48	74	0.49

Route: A77
Section: Ayr to Glasgow city boundary
Length Kms.: 46.70

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	8	29	75	112	0.29
1992	5	31	72	108	0.28
1993	3	18	64	85	0.22
1994	3	22	57	82	0.21

Route: A77[1]
Section: Stranraer to Glasgow city boundary (whole trunk road)
Length Kms.: 129.88

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	11	48	108	167	0.31
1992	11	55	119	185	0.35
1993	6	36	103	145	0.27
1994	3	48	105	156	0.29

[1] The accident rates in this table reflect corrections to traffic flow data used in the answer given to the hon. Member on 23 February. [OR volume 225, number 63, column 601–603].

Route: A77
Section: Within Glasgow city boundary
Length Kms.: 6.00

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	1	28	65	94	1.67
1992	0	21	57	78	1.38
1993	0	14	50	64	1.13
1994	0	20	42	62	1.10

Route: A74
Section: National boundary to Millbank[1]
Length Kms.: 92.16

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	4	31	76	111	0.15
1992	8	26	55	89	0.12
1993	7	24	50	81	0.11
1994	1	21	37	59	0.08

[1] The construction worked related to the upgrading of the A74 to motorway has been underway during the reporting period making separation of individual dual and motorway sections impractical for this report.

Route: M74
Section: Millbank to Maryville
Length Kms.: 35.83

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	4	9	23	36	0.09
1992	0	11	26	37	0.09
1993	1	8	20	29	0.07
1994	1	9	43	53	0.13

Route: A74/M74
Section: National boundary to Maryville (whole trunk road)
Length Kms.: 127.99

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	8	40	99	147	0.13
1992	8	37	81	126	0.11
1993	8	32	70	110	0.09
1994	2	30	80	112	0.10

Route: M74
Section: Within Glasgow city boundary
Length Kms.: 5.50

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	1	17	51	69	1.73
1992	1	13	42	56	1.40
1993	3	15	26	44	1.10
1994	0	13	27	40	1.00

Route: A96
Section: Aberdeen to Fochabers
Length Kms.: 85.63

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	3	26	58	87	0.33
1992	3	28	71	102	0.39
1993	2	19	65	86	0.32
1994	5	16	52	73	0.28

Route: A96
Section: Fochabers to Inverness
Length Kms.: 73.01

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	3	22	52	77	0.26
1992	6	13	56	75	0.25
1993	4	13	47	64	0.21
1994	2	12	42	56	0.19

Route: A96
Section: Aberdeen to Inverness (whole trunk road)
Length Kms.: 158.63

Year	Personal injury accidents Fatal	Serious	Slight	Total	Section accident rate
1991	6	48	110	164	0.29
1992	9	41	127	177	0.31
1993	6	32	112	150	0.27
1994	7	28	94	129	0.23

The accident rates shown in all the tables are expressed in numbers of personal injury accidents per million vehicle kilometres travelled. The traffic flows are estimated from sample counts taken at specific sites and updated annually using national growth factors.

Cancer

Mr. McFall: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list for each geographical unit within Argyll and Clyde health board the number and percentage of *(a)* all cancers, for male and female, *(b)* breast cancer, female *(c)* colo-rectal cancer, male and female and *(d)* prostate cancer, male, registered within the period 1984 to 1989 inclusive and surviving for at least five years; and how many individuals in each category were registered only on death. [27577]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested is set out in the tables.

Table 1: Total numbers of cancers registered and numbers registered from death certificates only by site of cancer, geographical area of residence at time of diagnosis and sex, Argyll and Clyde health board, 1984–89

(A) All malignant neoplasms (ICD-9 140-208[1])

Area of residence at diagnosis	Total numbers of registrations Males	Females	Numbers of registrations made from death certificates only Males	Females
Area 1 G52, G53, G60, G78, G82, G83, G84	1,156	1,163	75	81
Area 2 PA1–PA9	2,085	2,063	216	178
Area 3 PA10–PA19	1,474	1,410	61	54
Area 4 PA20–PA29	514	578	17	44
Area 5 PA30–PA39	291	296	12	17
Area 6 PA40–PA49	36	43	3	0
Area 7 PA60–PA69	11	14	0	0
Area 8 PA70–PA79	38	36	4	1
Argyll and Clyde health board	5,605	5,603	388	375

[1] Excludes registrations of non-melanoma skin cancer (ICD-9 173).

(B) Cancer of the large bowel (ICD-9 153+154)

Area of residence at diagnosis	Total numbers of registrations Males	Females	Numbers of registrations made from death certificates only Males	Females
Area 1 G52, G53, G60, G78, G82, G83, G84	137	165	3	16
Area 2 PA1–PA9	203	271	16	25
Area 3 PA10–PA19	150	171	7	8
Area 4 PA20–PA29	76	81	3	9
Area 5 PA30–PA39	47	49	5	1
Area 6 PA40–PA49	4	2	0	0
Area 7 PA60–PA69	3	4	0	0
Area 8 PA70–PA79	7	9	0	0
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	627	752	34	59

(c) Cancer of the prostate (ICD-9 1985) and female breast (ICD-9 174)

Area of residence at diagnosis	Total numbers of registrations Males: prostate	Females: breast	Numbers of registrations made from death certificates only Males: prostate	Females: breast
Area 1 G52, G53, G60, G78, G82, G83, G84	87	303	7	16
Area 2 PA1–PA9	177	422	9	29
Area 3 PA10–PA19	136	325	9	9
Area 4 PA20–PA29	52	123	2	15
Area 5 PA30–PA39	39	75	1	1
Area 6 PA40–PA49	4	18	0	0
Area 7 PA60–PA69	1	3	0	0
Area 8 PA70–PA79	5	5	2	0
Argyll and Clyde health board	501	1,274	30	70

Table 2: Total numbers of persons registered with cancer and eligible for inclusion in survival analysis[2], numbers and percentage alive at five years following diagnosis by site of cancer, geographical area of residence at diagnosis and sex, Argyll and Clyde Health Board, 1984–89

(A) All malignant neoplasms (ICD-9 140–208[1])

Area of residence at diagnosis	Males Number of cases[2]	Five years after diagnosis Numbers alive	Percentage alive	Females Number of cases[2]	Five years after diagnosis Numbers alive	Percentage alive
Area 1 G52, G53, G60, G78, G82, G83, G84	998	220	22.0	1,009	378	37.5
Area 2 PA1–PA9	1,768	324	18.3	1,778	546	30.7
Area 3 PA10–PA19	1,316	265	20.1	1,284	395	30.8
Area 4 PA20–PA29	461	87	18.8	490	158	32.3
Area 5 PA30–PA39	263	72	27.5	269	95	35.4
Area 6 PA40–PA49	30	8	26.5	41	12	29.3
Area 7 PA60–PA69	9	3	33.3	13	2	15.4
Area 8 PA70–PA79	32	14	43.8	35	15	42.9
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	4,877	990	20.3	4,919	1,604	32.6

[1] Excludes registrations of non-melanoma skin cancer (ICD-9 173).
[2] Excludes
(i) second and subsequent primary tumours in any patient.
(ii) registrations made from death certificates only.
(iii) registrations where the vital status of the patient is unknown.

(B) Cancer of the large bowel (ICD-9 153+154)

Area of residence at diagnosis	Males Number of cases[2]	Five years after diagnosis Numbers alive	Percentage alive	Females Number of cases[2]	Five years after diagnosis Numbers alive	Percentage alive
Area 1 G52, G53, G60, G78, G82, G83, G84	117	36	30.7	144	48	33.6
Area 2 PA1–PA9	176	38	21.8	226	59	26.3
Area 3 PA10–PA19	133	40	30.4	159	60	37.6
Area 4 PA20–PA29	65	17	25.6	63	24	37.8
Area 5 PA30–PA39	40	14	34.2	48	16	32.5
Area 6 PA40–PA49	4	1	25.0	2	0	0.0
Area 7 PA60–PA69	3	2	66.7	4	0	0.0
Area 8 PA70–PA79	6	2	33.3	9	2	22.2
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	544	150	27.6	655	209	31.9

[1] Excludes
(i) second and subsequent primary tumours in any patient.
(ii) registrations made from death certificates only.
(iii) registrations where the vital status of the patient is unknown.

(B) Cancer of the prostate (ICD-9 185) and female breast (ICD-9 174)

Area of residence at diagnosis	Males Number of cases[2]	Five years after diagnosis Numbers alive	Percentage alive	Females Number of cases[2]	Five years after diagnosis Numbers alive	Percentage alive
Area 1 G52, G53, G60, G78, G82, G83, G84	71	23	32.0	267	154	57.8
Area 2 PA1–PA9	155	45	29.2	375	214	57.0
Area 3 PA10–PA19	121	30	24.8	295	151	51.3
Area 4 PA20–PA29	45	7	14.8	98	47	47.6
Area 5 PA30–PA39	38	14	35.6	69	38	54.5
Area 6 PA40–PA49	3	2	66.7	18	5	27.8
Area 7 PA60–PA69	0	—	—	3	1	33.3
Area 8 PA70–PA79	2	1	50.0	5	4	80.0
Argyll and Clyde Health Board	435	121	27.9	1,130	614	54.3

[1] Excludes
(i) second and subsequent primary tumours in any patient.
(ii) registrations made from death certificates only.
(iii) registrations where the vital status of the patient is unknown.

Disabled Living Centres

Mr. Battle: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all disabled living centres in Scotland; and how much his Department contributes to each of their budgets. [27767]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are six disabled living centres in Scotland, situated in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Grangemouth, Inverness, Paisley and St. Andrews. As DLCs are locally based, they are eligible to seek financial support from local statutory agencies. I understand that all six DLCs are funded by either local authorities or health boards.

Prisoners (Suicide)

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the numbers of prisoners in Scotland committing acts of suicide and self-harm in each year since 1988. [27675]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Michael Connarty, dated 14 June 1995:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question relating to the number of prisoners in Scotland committing acts of suicide and self-harm in each year since 1988.

Information and statistics on the number of prisoners who commit acts of self-harm are not available. The table below shows the number of prisoners who have committed suicide, whilst in custody, each year since 1988.

Year	*Number*
1988	7
1989	6
1990	3
1991	4
1992	9
1993	5
1994	15

A further death in custody in 1994 is subject to the findings of a Fatal Accident Inquiry, which is due to be held later this month.

A1 Steering Group

Mr. John Home Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many times the A1 steering group has met during the last two years; what were the dates of the meetings; what were the principal items on the agenda; and if he will make a statement on the future of the A1 steering group and his Department's representation on it. [27584]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The A1 steering group has met formally twice in the last two years on 22 February 1994 and 9 March 1995. The agenda covered road safety, traffic growth, progress with the promotion of road improvements, accident investigation and prevention measures and route management. The Government consider that the A1 steering group provides a useful forum and propose to continue to sponsor annual meetings.

Meat Hygiene Inspectors

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many meat hygiene inspectors were employed by Scottish local authorities prior to the establishment of the Meat Hygiene Service. [28293]

Sir Hector Monro: A total of 125 meat hygiene inspectors were employed by Scottish local authorities prior to 1 April 1995 when the Meat Hygiene Service came into being.

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many inspectors are employed in Scotland following the establishment of the Meat Hygiene Service. [28292]

Sir Hector Monro: Currently 112 meat hygiene inspectors are employed in Scotland by the Meat Hygiene Service.

School Meals

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the percentage and number of children receiving *(a)* free school meals and *(b)* parentally paid for school meals for the last 10 years. [28440]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information requested for education authority schools is as follows:

	Free meals		*Paid meals*	
Year	*Number of pupils taking meals*	*Percentage of all pupils present*	*Number of pupils taking meals*	*Percentage of all pupils present*
1985	136,669	18.2	182,255	24.2
1986	136,627	18.6	179,868	24.5
1987	143,194	19.6	186,191	25.5
1988	145,219	19.9	184,780	25.3
1989	105,232	14.8	223,456	31.3
1990	99,303	14.1	230,410	32.7
1991	101,915	14.6	230,378	33.0
1992	107,186	15.4	227,740	32.8
1993	107,709	15.7	238,493	34.7
1994	121,479	16.7	230,314	31.7

Source:

Annual school meals census in January of each year.

Local Authority Social Services

Mr. Tom Clarke: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will, list for each available year since 1970, the number of cases of assistance by local authority social services departments, showing separately for each year *(a)* the number of telephone installations, *(b)* telephone adaptions, *(c)* telephone rentals paid, *(d)* installations of other communications equipment, *(e)* television installations, *(f)* payment of television licences or rentals, *(g)* the number of radio sets provided, *(h)* the number of other personal aids provided, *(i)* the number of adaptions to property and *(j)* the number of holidays provided.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The table gives the number of cases of assistance between 1979 and 1993. Complete data prior to 1979 are not available. The categories match as closely as possible to those requested.

Material provision by Scottish Social Work Departments

Number of cases, by year

Year Ended	Telephone installations	Telephone attachments installed	Telephone rentals paid	Alarm systems installed (with and without speech)	Television installations	Payment of television licences or rentals	Radio sets provided	Aids to daily living	Adaptations to property	Holidays provided
1979	864	n/a	1,975	n/a	[1]19	2,796	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1980	817	n/a	2,179	n/a	[1]12	3,316	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1981	674	n/a	2,993	n/a	[1]54	3,874	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1982	490	n/a	2,682	n/a	[1]301	3,885	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1983	526	n/a	2,016	n/a	[1]56	3,378	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
1984	674	n/a	2,032	n/a	0	870	n/a	[2]4,110	[2]19,387	2,000
1985	751	n/a	2,140	n/a	[1]29	51	n/a	[2]47,326	21,276	2,733
1986[3]	733	123	2,233	[4]4,215	35	235	117	[2]46,602	19,510	3,406
1987[5]	833	163	4,486	[4]4,186	27	1,810	89	[2]48,127	19,328	2,741
1988[5]	913	192	2,013	[6]2,261	33	9,365	89	[7]55,810	21,418	3,121
1989[5]	372	106	1,294	[6]5,762	4	9,945	47	[8]26,064	11,022	1,088
1990[10]	508	158	1,249	7,263	2	10,248	13	[11]28,894	[11]12,556	[11]1,285
1991[12]	350	308	1,116	[14]4,280	3	11,637	81	[13]37,832	[13]12,550	1,392
1992[15]	394	123	276	5,950	6	5,036	104	55,614	31,304	1,300
1993[16]	346	226	288	6,718	1	4,976	81	45,692	28,910	1,116

[1] Includes radio.
[2] Lothian figures for 1983.
[3] Strathclyde figures use 1985 figures for Glasgow.
[4] Excludes Strathclyde and Tayside.
[5] Strathclyde figures are for 1986.
[6] Excludes Strathclyde.
[7] Lothian figure estimated.
[8] Excludes Shetland.
[9] Lothian figures are for clients rather than cases.
[10] Excludes Strathclyde, and Central and Orkney figures for 1989.
[11] Lothian figures are for 1989, and adaptions and holidays figures are for West Lothian only.
[12] Excludes Strathclyde, and Borders figures for 1990.
[13] Lothian figures are for 1989 and the adaptations figure is for West Lothian only.
[14] Lothian figures are for 1990.
[15] Excludes Strathclyde and uses 1990 figures for Borders and 1991 figures for Fife.
[16] Excludes Strathclyde and Borders, and uses 1992 figures for Lothian.

Disabled People

Mr. Alfred Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the expenditure on personal social services for disabled people in each year since 1970. [28204]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information from 1980 to 1993 is available and is listed in the table. Figures are at cash value.

Identifiable Gross Expenditure by local authorities on personal social services for disabled people: 1980–1993

	£000
1992–93	51,778
1991–92	43,059
1990–91	36,971
1989–90	33,011
1988–89	15,363
1987–88	14,090
1986–87	13,232
1985–86	13,036
1984–85	12,209
1983–84	10,085
1982–83	4,988
1981–82	4,436
1980–81	4,408
1979–80	3,203

GP Fundholders

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about the payment of management allowances to general practitioner fundholders. [29147]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Payments of management allowances are made to fundholding practices to reimburse the additional costs incurred in directly managing National Health Service resources on behalf of their patients. Sections 87A to 87C of the National Health Service (Scotland) Act 1978 enable fundholders to receive an allotted sum determined in such manner and by reference to such factors as the Secretary of State may direct. Payments to fundholders for the sole purpose of management expenses should have been specified within the fundholding regulations. Amending regulations will be laid before Parliament shortly. Extra-statutory management allowance payments made in the period 1990–91 to 1994–95, estimated at around £9 million, and any subsequent payments made from 1 April 1995 until the statutory position is regularised have now been authorised.

Railway Restructuring, Strathclyde

Mr. Raymond S. Robertson: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what provision he is making for the additional costs being incurred by Strathclyde regional council and Strathclyde passenger transport executive as a result of the restructuring of the railways. [29148]

Mr. Lang: A special grant report has been laid before the House today for the payment of grant in 1995–96 to Strathclyde regional council. The purpose of the grant is to provide support to SRC for the additional costs falling to be met by it in the financial year 1995–96 for the railway passenger services provided by British Rail to Strathclyde passenger transport executive arising from the restructuring of railways in Great Britain in accordance with the Railways Act 1993.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Upper Limb Disorders

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how many civil servants have taken legal action against each Department and agency as a result of work-related upper limb disorders for each year since 1990. [28117]

Mr. Horam: This information is not held centrally.

Charters (Compensation)

Mr. Byers: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster how much the state has paid each year in compensation under the terms of each charter since their inception; how many claims for compensation have been made; and how many have resulted in a payment being made. [27560]

Mr. Horam: Information concerning compensation paid under the terms of each charter is not held centrally. However, Departments have provided the following figures:

Table 1: Passenger's Charter

£000

Year	Season ticket discounts	Compensation	Total
1992–93	85	1,850	1,900
1993–94	2,400	2,300	4,700
1994–95	200	3,300	3,500

No figure is available for the number of claims.

Season ticket discounts are made where train operating units have failed to meet its punctuality and reliability targets over a given period of time. Compensation is given as a result of claims concerning single journeys.

Table 2: London Underground Customer's Charter

Year	Claims made	Compensation paid £000
August 1992 to March 1993	23,763	56
1993–94	142,071	329
1994–95	252,692	553

Table 3: Taxpayer's Charter

Year	Claims	Amout paid £000
1991–92	286	339
1992–93	743	389
1993–94	800	418
1994–95	1,107	407

Inland Revenue does not centrally collect statistics on the total number of claims made; the figures given are for claims which resulted in payment. The Inland Revenue also gives other forms of financial redress for its mistakes or delays in handling taxpayers' affairs, by, for example deciding not to collect tax or interest which would otherwise be properly due under tax law.

Table 4: Northern Ireland Rail Passenger's Charter

Year	Number of claims	Amount paid £000
1 January 1993–31 December 1993	291	1.5
1 January 1994–31 December 1994	728	2.0
1 January 1995–31 March 1995	418	1.4
Totals	1,437	4.8

Table 5: Northern Ireland Bus Passenger's Charter

Year of charter	Number of incidents	Amount £000	Complimentary ticket value £000
1 April 1992–31 March 1993	320	0.3	0.3
1 April 1993–31 March 1994	340	0.5	0.4
1 April 1994–1 March 1995	432	0.6	0.5
1 April 1995–9 June 1995	77	0.3	0.3
Totals	1,169	1.7	1.5

Table 6: The Traveller's Charter

Year	Number of cases	Compensation paid £000
January 1992–March 1992	37	2.7
April 1992–March 1993	86	6.4
April 1993–March 1994	96	11.4
April 1994–March 1995	91	5.1
April 1995–May 1995	15	1.0

In addition, Departments have a number of arrangements for paying compensation which are not directly linked to charters. These include the Department of Social Security's special payments arrangements set up in 1977. Figures are not yet available for 1994–95. However, in 1993–94, the Benefits Agency paid £3,143,491 in 7,631 compensation cases under these arrangements; the Contributions Agency paid out a total of £5,644 for seven cases.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 15 June 1995

DEFENCE

Service Personnel (Deaths)

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many service personnel have been killed while training or engaged on non-combat duties in the last 10 years. [28225]

Mr. Soames: The information requested is as follows:

1985: 208
1986: 178
1987: 191
1988: 207
1989: 255
1990: 218
1991: 191
1992: 167
1993: 169
1994: 152

Skilled Tradesmen

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what action he is taking to ensure that skilled tradesmen in the armed forces have the opportunity to extend or maintain their skills by involvement in depot or major servicing and engineering where these are carried out by civilian businesses. [27915]

Mr. Soames: The armed forces continue to train and practise their tradesmen in the full range of skills required to support the operational task and deliver military capability. Where it is deemed essential that a number of these tradesmen attain and maintain depot level skills following the transfer of such work to the private sector, either an element of the work will be retained in service or appropriate contractual arrangements will be put in place with industry to second service personnel to enable them to receive the required skill enhancements.

RAF Newton

Mr. Hargreaves: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has for the future of RAF Newton. [29412]

Mr. Soames: As part of the wider changes to RAF ground training, a consultative document was issued on 28 March 1995 recommending the relocation of headquarters air cadets from RAF Newton to RAF Cranwell, its merger with headquarters university air squadrons and the reduction of RAF Newton to an enclave. My Department has consulted thoroughly with trade unions and relevant local authorities, and full and careful consideration has been given to all the representations received.

Following this work, I am satisfied that no issues have been raised which will call into question the viability of the proposals, which will achieve significant annual running costs savings. I have therefore decided that the proposals should now be implemented.

Third-generation Anti-tank Guided Weapons System

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total Government expenditure on the TRIGAT long range anti-tank weapon. [28858]

Mr. Freeman: The total amount spent by the Ministry of Defence to 31 May 1995 on the TRIGAT long-range anti-tank programme is £210 million, at 1995–96 prices. This includes a proportion of the costs of the feasibility and project definition phases, which were combined for the long-range and medium-range TRIGAT programmes, as well as the costs of the current development programme.

Defence Systems

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the Patriot missile defence system. [28857]

Mr. Freeman: The Patriot missile defence system is one of the options being considered as part of the pre-feasibility study which I announced to the House on 18 October 1994, *Official Report*, column 239, to provide advice on systems, capabilities, time scales, costs and technical risk.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what assessment he has made of the medium extended air defence system; and if he will make a statement. [28844]

Mr. Freeman: The medium extended air defence system is one of the options being considered as part of the pre-feasibility study which I announced to the House on 18 October 1994, *Official Report*, column 239, to provide advice on systems, capabilities, time scales, costs and technical risk.

Eurofighter 2000

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what recent discussions he has had with his German counterpart concerning Eurofighter 2000; [28842]

(2) what assessment his Department has made of political developments in Germany concerning the Eurofighter 2000; and if he will make a statement. [28843]

Mr. Freeman: My right hon. and learned Friend met his German opposite number on 28 May for discussions on a number of topics, including Eurofighter 2000. I am confident that Germany remains committed to the development of the Eurofighter 2000 aircraft.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list all areas within *(a)* his Department, *(b)* agencies under his Department's control and *(c)* organisations for which he has ministerial responsibility to which Crown immunity applies; what consideration he has given to removing this; and if he will make a statement. [28653]

Mr. Freeman: An Act of Parliament is presumed not to bind the Crown unless the contrary intention is clearly stated, or there is a necessary implication that the Crown is to be bound. Crown immunity is being progressively reduced, as legislative opportunities arise. However, even in circumstances where the Crown is not bound by legislation, it is Government policy that it should comply as though the requirements apply to it, wherever appropriate.

To list all areas in which Crown immunity may apply would involve disproportionate cost.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence how many civil servants in his Department are currently working on matters related to the Scott inquiry; if a dedicated unit has been established; and what is the estimated cost to date of civil servants dealing with matters relating to the Scott inquiry. [28865]

Mr. Freeman: A Scott inquiry unit was established in the MOD in December 1992. There are currently two civil servants working in the unit. The approximate direct cost of the unit to date, including the cost of the provision of papers, is estimated to be £190,000.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence what legal advice he has sought from solicitors or barristers in respect of draft conclusions reached by the Scott inquiry; what is the estimated cost of such legal expenses to public funds, and if he will make a statement. [28896]

Mr. Freeman: The Government do not consider it right to publish the nature or cost of any advice which may have been given to individual witnesses to the Scott inquiry.

This is a matter of confidence between them and any legal advisers they may have retained.

Chinook Crash

Mr. Bill Walker: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the findings of the inquiry into the Chinook crash on 2 June 1994.

Mr. Rifkind: I express to the widows and family members of those who died the Government's deep regret and condolences in their loss.

I have this afternoon placed in the Libraries of both Houses a summary of findings of the inquiry into this tragic crash which claimed the lives of 29 people. After an exhaustive inquiry into all the circumstances, the possibilities of major technical or structural failure, hostile action or electromagnetic interference with navigation equipment were eliminated as possible causes. On all the evidence, it was concluded that the cause of the accident was that the two pilots had wrongly continued to fly towards the Mull of Kintyre below a safe altitude in unsuitable weather conditions. This constituted a failure in their duty and regrettably, therefore, it was concluded that both pilots had been negligent.

I confirm that the MOD will pay compensation to the next of kin where this is due. Legal advice is that in the particular circumstances of this accident the Government's legal liability to the passengers on board is limited by the terms of the Carriage by Air Acts (Application of Provisions) Order 1967 which derives from the relevant international conventions. The Government have, however, previously made clear their view that the limit of 100,000 special drawing rights—approximately £100,000—arising from these conventions is out of date. Accordingly the MOD will consider claims, in this case, above 100,000 SDR. In so doing, they will take account of the discussions already in progress within the civil airline industry about the right limit for airlines' liability. These discussions will inform, but not necessarily determine, the Government's decision on whether the Chinook passenger claims should be subject to an upper limit on compensation and, if so, at what higher figure.

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what is his Department's definition of an air transport undertaking. [28869]

(2) if the Chinook helicopter involved in the crash in the Mull of Kintyre in June 1994 was partaking in an air transport undertaking; and if he will make a statement. [28868]

Mr. Soames: The Chinook was on an air transport task from RAF Aldergrove to Fort George barracks, Inverness. The Ministry of Defence's understanding of an air transport undertaking is the movement by air of personnel and cargo within and between theatres of operation. The compensation rights of the families concerned, however, are not dependent on how the Ministry of Defence chooses to describe any aspect of this tragic accident.

Inhumane Weapons Review Conference

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on his aims at the United Nations inhumane weapons review conference in September. [28230]

Mr. Freeman: At the UN weaponry convention review conference in September and October of this year, the UK's main aim will be to work towards strengthening protocol II of the convention to impose stricter controls on the use of land-mines. Specific measures which we will be pursuing include: an extension of the scope of the protocol to cover non-international armed conflicts; new provisions on self-destruct mechanisms in anti-personnel mines, detectable mines, and the marking and mapping of minefields; provisions on the transfer of anti-personnel mines; and an effective verification mechanism.

Compensation Claims

Dr. David Clark: To ask the Secretary of State for Defence, pursuant to his answer of 7 June, *Official Report*, column *192*, if he will list the dates, units involved, and the injuries leading to the cases of compensation claims made against his Department in the last five years arising from the negligent discharge of weapons. [28867]

Mr. Soames: My noble Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Defence will write to the hon. Member and a copy of the letter will be placed in the Library of the House.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many written parliamentary questions were tabled for answer by his Department in each of the past five years; how many of these were not answered because the information *(a)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, *(b)* was not held centrally and *(c)* was not normally disclosed; how many of these could now be answered due to computerisation, more effective and efficient operational systems or more open government; and if he will list each question along with the name and constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member who originally tabled it. [28520]

Mr. Baldry: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what percentage of parliamentary questions, which would have been answered directly by him or his Ministers prior to the establishment of executive agencies, are now referred to the chief executive of such an agency. [28497]

Mr. Baldry: Ministers are accountable to Parliament for all matters concerning their agencies. Written parliamentary questions concerning matters which have been delegated to the chief executive of an executive agency in its framework document, normally receive a reply from the Minister to the effect that he or she has asked the chief executive to reply direct to the Member by letter. The chief executive's letter is published in *Hansard* after the Minister's reply.

Bosnia

Mr. Ieuan Wyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs to which areas in Bosnia it is *(a)* possible or *(b)* not possible to post items from the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement. [26885]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Due to operational difficulties caused by the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Post Office is unable to accept items of mail for onward delivery to any part of that country.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many civil servants in his Department are currently working on matters related to the Scott inquiry; if a dedicated unit has been established; and what is the estimated cost to date of civil servants dealing with matters relating to the Scott inquiry. [28863]

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Three civil servants in the FCO are working full time on matters related to the Scott inquiry. Other FCO officials are involved, but not on a full-time basis.

A dedicated unit was established in December 1992, and continues to exist.

The estimated cost to date of the unit dealing full time with the Scott inquiry is £164,027. It is not possible to quantify a figure for the other officials.

Locate in Scotland, North America

Mr. Salmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what guidelines he has issued to United Kingdom diplomatic and consular staff concerning the activities and work of Locate in Scotland in north America; what communication there has been with the United States Government following the public comments of the United Kingdom consul general in San Francisco on the work of Locate in Scotland and other inward investment agencies; what clarification the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has issued on the role of the United Kingdom inward investment agencies following those comments; and what discussions have been held as a consequence regarding a new policy towards United Kingdom inward investment agencies. [28700]

Mr. Goodlad: All overseas commercial posts have guidelines on co-operation with Locate in Scotland as well as the equivalent organisations for Wales and Northern Ireland. Together with the Invest in Britain Bureau and English regional agencies, these organisations are members of the Committee on Overseas Promotion, which co-ordinates the promotion of inward investment into the United Kingdom.

No clarification of those guidelines, nor a change of policy, is necessary. The question of a communication with the United States Administration does not arise.

Sex Tourism

Ms Jane Kennedy: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what consultations he has had with the Government of *(a)* the Phillippines and *(b)* Thailand concerning possible measures to arrest the growth of sex tourism in those countries. [28840]

Mr. Goodlad: We regularly take opportunities to raise the issue of sex tourism with the Governments of the Phillippines and Thailand. I discussed child prostitution legislation with the Thai Government during my visit to Thailand in May.

We also regularly discuss practical forms of co-operation between our law enforcement authorities within the framework of Interpol.

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how many Indonesian police officers have received training under the UK military training and assistance scheme. [28906]

Mr. David Davis: The details of training given under the United Kingdom military training assistance scheme are confidential between Governments.

Committee of the Regions

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the names, together with the previous and present jobs, of the Committee of the Regions set up under the provisions of the treaty of Maastricht. [28702]

Mr. David Davis: Biographies of all members of the Committee of the Regions may be obtained from the CoR press office, Rue Ravenstein 2, 1000 Bruxelles, Belgium.

Nigeria

Mr. Hunter: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the further measures which he proposes to take to demonstrate his concern about the abuse of democracy in Nigeria.

Mr. Baldry: We deplore the fact that there has been no progress towards democracy in Nigeria in the two years since the annulment of the presidential elections. We look to the regime to use the occasion of the presentation of the report of the national constitutional conference due on 27 June to initiate a credible timetable for a return to civilian democratic rule. We shall continue to keep our policy under review, together with our EU, Commonwealth and other partners.

PRIME MINISTER

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Prime Minister what communications he has received from Lord Justice Scott over the evidence he gave to the inquiry into arms for Iraq; on what dates the communications were sent to him; and what were the dates of his replies. [28860]

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to the hon. Members for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on 12 June 1995, *Official Report*, column *373*.

Mr. Byers: To ask the Prime Minister how many civil servants in his Department are currently working on matters related to the Scott inquiry; if a dedicated unit has been established; and what is the estimated cost to date of civil servants dealing with matters relating to the Scott inquiry. [28862]

The Prime Minister: Within the Cabinet Office, the number of civil servants working exclusively on matters relating to Sir Richard Scott's inquiry is five, all of whom are members of a dedicated unit. The cost of the unit since December 1992 has been approximately £400,000.

Former Prime Ministers (Payments)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what payments are available to former Prime Ministers; which of these cease immediately upon their death; which are phased out or continued for a fixed or indefinite period to allow their bereaved spouses to deal with duties following their death; and if he will make a statement. [28535]

The Prime Minister: Under the provisions of the Ministerial and other Pensions and Salaries Act 1991, former Prime Ministers are entitled to receive payment from the Consolidated Fund of half of the salary payable in respect of the office of the Prime Minister at the time of leaving office. This Act also increased the pensions of then former Prime Ministers to an amount equal to the new pension entitlement of the office of that time. Payments cease on death, subject to arrangements for spouses and children based largely on the parliamentary pension scheme.

On 1 April 1991, an allowance was introduced to assist former Prime Ministers with the continuing heavy burden of office and secretarial costs arising from their special position in public life. The allowance is similar in purpose and amount to the parliamentary office costs allowance but is paid in respect of public and not parliamentary duties. It ceases immediately on death, but a sum equal to one third of the annual amount is made available to the executors of the will to assist with the costs of winding up any office organisation.

Terrorist Prisoners

Dr. Spink: To ask the Prime Minister if he will make it his policy that no terrorist prisoners will be given special treatment in respect of early release; and if he will make a statement. [28629]

The Prime Minister: The Government have already stated that prisoners convicted of terrorist offences are not political prisoners and must expect to serve their sentences in accordance with the law.

Royal Family (Official Engagements)

Mr. Mackinlay: To ask the Prime Minister if he will place in the Library the official engagements programmes of members of the royal family who receive funds from the civil list. [28611]

The Prime Minister: No.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Prime Minister what advice is issued to Ministers by him and/or the Cabinet Office in respect of answering written questions tabled by right hon. and hon. Members which directly relate, appear to relate or which could be construed to relate, to their declared financial interests; and if he will make a statement. [28565]

The Prime Minister: I have no reason to believe that guidance is necessary on this matter.

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Prime Minister, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, column *271*, regarding parliamentary questions, if he will list the dates on which his answers were subsequently clarified by means of written questions. [28852]

The Prime Minister: This is a matter of public record.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Amway

Mr. Campbell-Savours: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many meetings he has had with representatives of Amway in the last three months. [28320]

Mr. Heseltine: None.

Nigeria (Military Equipment)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the non-lethal equipment which has been supplied to Nigeria by United Kingdom companies since December 1993; who was the United Kingdom supplier company of that equipment; what was the value of that equipment in current prices; what was the date an export licence was granted for that equipment; and under which military list specification the licence was granted. [26556]

Mr. Ian Taylor: I can add nothing to the answer I gave to the hon. Member for Clydebank and Milngavie (Mr. Worthington) on 10 May, *Official Report*, columns *517–18*. It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to disclose particulars of defence trade with other countries or details of export licences or applications for export licences.

West African Countries (Defence Trade)

Mr. Bennett: To ask the President of the Board of Trade to which west African countries goods defined as ML 6 in group 1 of part III of schedule 1 of SI 1992 No. 3092 and group 1 of part III of schedule 1 of SI 1994 No. 1191 have been exported since December 1993. [26555]

Mr. Ian Taylor: It has been the policy of successive Administrations not to disclose particulars of defence trade with other countries.

Electronic Batons

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will list the companies to which export licences were granted for the export of electronic batons in 1992. [27660]

Mr. Ian Taylor: No licences were granted for these goods in 1992.

Water Rates

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the President of the Board of Trade if he will refer to the Office of Fair Trading the practice of water utilities demanding payment of water rates in advance of water being delivered. [28712]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: I have drawn the right hon. Gentleman's question to the attention of the Director General of Water Services, who is responsible for regulating the commercial activities of the water utilities in England and Wales.

Consumers in Europe Group

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what was the grant for the consumers in Europe group in each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement. [28306]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: The consumers in Europe group is funded by the Department of Trade and Industry via its grant in aid to the National Consumer Council. The grant allocation to the CEG in each of the last five years was:

Year	£
1990–91	156,466
1991–92	157,874
1992–93	175,749
1993–94	197,921
1994–95	'180,731

Source:
NCC annual reports—' taken from NCC management accounts for 1994–95.

Ms Clare Spottiswoode

Mr. McNamara: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what is the current civil service grade and salary of Ms Clare Spottiswoode, the Ofgas regulator. [27664]

Mr. Heseltine: Ms Clare Spottiswoode is not a civil servant. Her salary as Director General of Gas Supply was determined under the provisions of the Gas Act 1986.

Mr. McNamara: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) when he intends to announce his decision as to the proposed new salary of Mrs. Clare Spottiswoode, the Ofgas regulator; [27665]

(2) what *(a)* executive directorships, *(b)* potential executive directorships and *(c)* other financial interests the Ofgas regulator, Ms Clare Spottiswoode, has asked to be taken into consideration in making her application for a salary review. [27666]

Mr. Heseltine: Details of the revised remuneration package agreed with the Director General of Gas Supply, Ms Spottiswoode, were given in the answer to my hon. Friend the member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 13 June 1995, *Official Report*, columns *451-52*.

At present, Ms Spottiswoode does not hold any non-executive directorships.

Private Mines

Mr. Morgan: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) if he will list all private mining companies which have received grant assistance for investment with permission granted by the European Union Energy Commission under decision No. 2064/86/ECSC; and on what dates the grants were paid; [28855]

(2) on what date grant disbursement was made to United Kingdom private mines listed in the European Union press release on 13 December 1994

Mr. Page: Having consulted my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and for Wales, I confirm that all the private mining companies which have been authorised to receive investment aid under decision No. 2064/86/ECSC are given in the European Commission's press release dated 13 December 1994.

Payments against the offers of grant are released by instalments depending upon the capital investment made and jobs created.

Post Office (Crime Statistics)

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the President of the Board of Trade how many *(a)* assaults on postal delivery workers and *(b)* thefts involving the Royal Mail took place in the SE3, SE7, SE10, SE13 and SE18 postal districts in each of the last five years. [27005]

Mr. Page: In the interests of staff and mail security, it is Post Office policy not to disclose such information.

Correspondence

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade when he expects to reply to the letter from the hon. Member for South Hams, dated 27 February, about the inspection of radio equipment by British Telecom engineers; and what are the reasons for the time taken to reply. [27077]

Mr. Ian Taylor: The Department has no record of having received my hon. Friend's letter. I suggest that he writes to me again and I will ensure that the matter he raises is looked into as speedily as possible.

Compliance Cost Assessment

Mr. Steen: To ask the President of the Board of Trade (1) which organisations and companies his Department has consulted with regard to directive 76/768/EEC, as amended by the sixth amendment 93/35/EEC; what was the nature of the consultation; and what discussions have taken place on the cost to the industry of implementing the directive as amended, and the effect it will have on jobs and profitability of the companies involved; [28547]

(2) if he will ensure that the draft regulations to implement in the United Kingdom directive 76/768/EEC, amended by a sixth amendment, directive 93/35/EEC, do not impose obligations not required by the directive; and when he hopes to publish the draft regulation on the cost of enforcement and the result of the compliance cost assessment investigations. [28533]

Mr. Jonathan Evans: Preliminary consultations on the implementation of directive 93/35/EEC have taken place with industry, trade associations, Government Departments and animal welfare groups. Full consultation on draft regulations to implement the directive, together with a compliance cost assessment is planned for the autumn. It is not my intention to impose any obligations on companies beyond those introduced by the directive.

Export Credits

Mr. Waterson: To ask the President of the Board of Trade what has been the economic impact of the increased level of resources which he has made available for export credits. [27050]

Mr. Needham: Since 1992, the ECGD has issued around £11 billion of guarantees for project and capital goods exports. This compares with around £6 billion of guarantees issued in the previous three years.

NATIONAL HERITAGE

Listed Buildings, Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many textile mills in Yorkshire are currently being considered for listing; and if he will name them. [27390]

Mr. Dorrell: There are currently no proposals before me concerning the listing of textile mills in Yorkshire. English Heritage is, however, undertaking a national thematic study of textile mills. It has recently published the results of the study for the Greater Manchester area for public consultation and work is well under way in respect of mills in Yorkshire.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage how many textile mills in Yorkshire are listed buildings; and if he will list them. [27391]

Mr. Dorrell: Until the statutory lists are computerised next year, a comprehensive list of textile mills in Yorkshire which are listed as being of special architectural or historic interest is not readily available. However, I have today placed in the Library a copy of a list of 106 mills and associated buildings in the country which are listed.

Brodsworth Hall, Yorkshire

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for National Heritage if he will list those who have been officially invited to attend the opening of Brodsworth hall, near Doncaster in July. [28279]

Mr. Dorrell: Brodsworth hall, South Yorkshire, is to be opened formally on Wednesday 5 July following five years' extensive restoration. I have today placed in the Library a copy of the list of those who have been invited to the official opening.

LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT

Legal Aid

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will give the net value and percentage of the civil legal aid budget spent on *(a)* personal injury claims, *(b)* multi-party actions and *(c)* industrial injury claims for each year since 1991. [27988]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Information on the cost of multi-party actions is not recorded separately and is, therefore, not available. The net cost and proportion of civil legal spent on personal injury claims and accidents at work in respect of all cases closed in each year since 1990–91 was as follows:

	1990–91	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
£ million				
All cases	143.5	198.3	273.5	363.8
All personal injury cases	8.6	13.9	22.3	38.0
Accidents at work	2.9	3.9	5.4	6.6
Percentages				
Percentage of personal injury/all	6	7	8	10
Percentage of accidents at work/all	2	2	2	2

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department if he will refer legal aid claims for mucous membrane disease to the multi-party actions committee; and if he will make a statement. [27987]

Mr. John M. Taylor: It is the responsibility of Legal Aid Board to decide whether a case is suitable for referral to the board's multi-party actions committee. The board has decided that this case is not suitable.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when he last met the Legal Aid Board to discuss multi-party action. [27989]

Mr. John M. Taylor: I am in frequent contact with the board about various matters, including multi-party actions.

Primary Legislation (Availability)

Mr. Gordon Prentice: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department what proportion of primary legislation is readily available *(a)* to hon. Members and *(b)* to the general public in its current amended form. [27658]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Approximately one third of primary legislation is available to hon. Members and to the general public in its current amended form.

Court Service

Sir Terence Higgins: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, if he will examine the reply from the courts agency to the letter from the right hon. Member for Worthing regarding the Court Service; and if he will investigate why a copy of the court judgment has still not been produced. [28711]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer, and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply directly to the right hon. Member.

Letter from M. D. Heubner to Sir Terrence Higgins MP, dated 14 June 1995:

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your question about the reasons why a copy of a court judgment has not yet been produced.

Judgment in the case of Fake-v-Jarvis will be delivered by the Registrar in the Court of Appeal (Civil Division) on Monday 19 June 1995.

The Registrar very much regrets the delay which is due to a very heavy workload. As I explained when I wrote to you on 22 May I am currently considering ways in which the pressure on the Registrar can be alleviated.

Local Courts Charter

Mr. Vaz: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department (1) how many copies of the publication "Looking at Local Court's Charter" were produced; [27431]

(2) what was the cost to public funds of the publication "Looking at a Local Court's Charter". [27430]

Mr. John M. Taylor: The publication was developed by a group of senior managers in the Magistrates' Courts Service and 750 copies were produced at a cost of £11,241. Most have been distributed to the 105 magistrates' courts committees, who are responsible locally for the management of magistrates courts. The remainder is held by the Central Council for Magistrates' Court Committees against any further requests for copies.

Civil Justice System

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department when Lord Woolf's report on the civil justice system will be published. [29407]

Mr. John M. Taylor: Lord Woolf's interim report on his access to justice inquiry will be published tomorrow, and copies will be placed in the Library of the House.

ENVIRONMENT

Rent Levels

Mr. Raynsford: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list by region the average rent levels for local authority dwellings for each local authority in 1995–96; what were the increases on 1994–95 levels and the average figures for each region; and what was the average rent level for local authority dwellings for the whole of England for 1995–96 and the increase on the 1994–95 average level. [27011]

Mr. Curry: I have today placed in the Library a table showing provisional 1995–96 average weekly rents for each housing authority in England and averages for all regions and for England, together with the increases these represent on 1994–95 average rents.

Sea Bathing (Hazard Notices)

Mr. Wilson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will bring forward proposals to improve hazard warning arrangements at privately owned bathing beaches and adjacent waters in England and Wales; [27255]

(2) If he will bring forward proposals to improve hazard warning arrangements for bathers in waters close to shore where trawling with nets is known to occur. [27526]

Mr. Atkins *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has no powers to deal with these matters. Local authorities can, subject to the approval of my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department make byelaws regulating boating activities within 1,000 m of the high water mark. Within the areas, for which they are responsible, harbour authorities can regulate navigation. Commercial fishing activities are regulated in England and Wales by local sea fisheries committees. Subject to the general law on liability, sea bathing is undertaken at the bather's own risk.

Special Areas of Conservation

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when the list of possible special areas of conservation for *(a)* rivers, *(b)* active raised bogs, *(c)* intertidal areas straddling the land sea divide, *(d)* otter, lutra lutra, *(e)* great crested newt, *(f)* fan moss and *(h)* oligotropic waters in medio European and perialpine areas with amphibious vegetation will be published for consultation. [28451]

Mr. Atkins: Additional SSSI notification work is required before we can consult on riverine possible special areas of conservation, further active raised bog and

blanket bog sites and some intertidal areas. Additional scientific and survey work is currently in progress to identify suitable sites for the otter, great crested newt, freshwater pearl mussel and fen moss. The nature conservation agencies are also considering whether more sites are required to represent oligotrpic waters in medio European and perialpine areas with amphibious vegetation in addition to those on which we have already consulted. I hope that a further consultation exercise will take place later this year.

Mr. Matthew Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans there are for Orton Brick pit site in Peterborough to be proposed for submission as a special area of conservation under the EU habitats and species directive. [28450]

Mr. Atkins: As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said in his reply to the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Waterson) on 31 March 1995, *Official Report*, columns *834–35*, the nature conservation agencies are in the process of carrying out further survey work before recommending possible special areas of conservation for the great crested newt to Government.

National Rivers Authority (Powers)

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if all powers, including reserve powers, currently available to the National Rivers Authority, will be transferred fully to the Environment Agency. [28250]

Mr. Atkins: The Environment Agency, which will be established by the Environment Bill currently progressing through our House, will carry out all of the current functions of the National Rivers Authority, together with the functions of Her Majesty's inspectorate of pollution and local waste regulation authorities. The powers available to the NRA will transfer to the agency subject to certain changes to reflect the broader functions of the agency, and to facilitate its effective operation through rationalisation of similar provisions between the existing regimes.

Mr. Temple-Morris: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if the powers available to the National Rivers Authority under schedule 25 of the Water Resources Act 1991, to make bylaws on navigation without navigation authorities, will be transferred fully to the Environment Agency. [28249]

Mr. Atkins: Schedule 18 of the Environment Bill, which is currently before our House, transfers to the Environment Agency the byelaw-making powers of the NRA under schedule 25 of the Water Resources Act 1991 without change.

Genetically Engineered Crops

Mr. Morley: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what studies are available to him on the environmental impact of genetically engineered crops designed to be resistant to herbicides; and what evidence there is of potential prejudice to the environment arising from their use. [28454]

Sir Paul Beresford: Under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 1992, the release or marketing of genetically modified organisms, including GM crops resistant to herbicides, is subject to prior consent. Advice is given on applications for consent by an independent committee of experts, the Advisory Committee on Releases to the Environment, which brings scientific knowledge to the Secretary of State on the impact of GM crops.

Information is also available from research programmes on the release of GM crops carried out by the Department of the Environment, the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food and the Scottish Office of Agriculture and Fisheries Department.

Current scientific information and our experience to date has not given cause for concern in terms of adverse effects on the environment from the release of GM crop plants resistant to herbicides. We will continue to use such information and the advice of ACRE in the review of applications to release GM organisms, including herbicide resistant crops, in order to assess their environmental impact.

Contaminated Land

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance he proposes to issue under part II of the Environment Bill [*Lords*] in respect of contaminated land as to *(a)* the extent of clean-up required, *(b)* who will set the standards, *(c)* determining who owns what, *(d)* determining who cleans up what and *(e)* determining who pays for what; and if he will make a statement. [28243]

Mr. Atkins: Clause 54 of the present draft of the Environment Bill which amends the Environmental Protection Act 1990 gives powers to the Secretary of State to issue guidance related to contaminated land as follows:

(References are to draft sections of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 as introduced in the House of Commons and amended in Committee).

S.78A(2) Guidance on the manner of determining whether land is "contaminated land" within the meaning of the Act.

S.78A(8) Guidance on what harm is significant and whether pollution of controlled waters is being or is likely to be caused.

S.78B(2) Guidance on the inspection of an area and on the identification of contaminated land and special sites.

S.78D(6) Guidance on remediation—what is to be done, standards of remediation, "reasonableness" in relation to cost and seriousness.

S.78E(4) Guidance on determining the "appropriate person" on whom to serve a remediation notice where there are two or more persons potentially liable.

S.78J(2) Guidance on the recovery of remediation costs and on hardship in this context.

S.78K(4) Guidance to the Agency on inspection of special sites and termination of special site status.

S.78NN Guidance on the exercise of the Agency's powers and duties.

A draft of the guidance on the definition and identification of contaminated land has already been issued. That guidance will be revised in the light of comments received and along with the rest of the guidance listed above will be subject to wide formal consultation as required by clause 54 in creating draft section 78R of the Environmental Protection Act 1990. In addition, section 78N provides for site-specific guidance from the appropriate agency.

Local Government Reorganisation

Mr. Steen: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will refer back the case for unitary status for South Hams to the Local Government Commission, following the referendum on the future of the district. [28545]

Mr. Curry: We are considering which districts should be reviewed afresh by the Local Government Commission and will announce our decision shortly.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of parliamentary questions which would have been answered directly by him or his Ministers prior to the establishment of executive agencies, are now referred to the chief executive of such an agency. [28493]

Sir Paul Beresford: Ministers are accountable to Parliament for all matters concerning their agencies. Written parliamentary questions concerning matters which have been delegated to the chief executive of an executive agency in its framework document, normally receive a reply from the Minister to the effect that he or she has asked the chief executive to reply direct to the Member by letter. The chief executive's letter is published in *Hansard* after the Minister's reply.

Housing and Homelessness

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what was *(a)* the number of his Department's homelessness acceptances and *(b)* the number of houses in multiple occupation in each local authority area in England, in the most recent year for which figures are available. [28666]

Mr. Robert B. Jones: A table is in the Library giving the numbers reported by local authorities in England of homeless households for which they accepted responsibility to secure permanent accommodation under the homelessness provisions of the 1985 Housing Act in 1994.

Information on the numbers of houses in multiple occupation in each local authority is not available.

Objective 1 Status, Merseyside

Mr. Waring: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the increase in employment on Merseyside to date as a result of its objective 1 status within the European Union. [28701]

Sir Paul Beresford: It is too early to tell. We are only just starting to receive grant claims from those carrying out capital projects. Monitoring and evaluation systems to inform the objective 1 partnership are being designed and put in place to provide information on outputs, including jobs.

Government Offices for the Regions

Mr. Bellingham: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will publish the indicative allocations to Government offices for the regions in respect of the second round of the single regeneration budget challenge fund. [29083]

Mr. Curry: The indicative allocations to Government offices for the regions for the first two years of round 2 of the challenge fund are shown in the table, expressed in terms of bands. These figures relate to the current total provision of £240 million for 1996–97 and 1997–98—that is, for £40 million in 1996–97 and £200 million in 1997–98. The sums available to support approved round 2 schemes in later years are subject to annual public expenditure decisions. The final allocations will depend upon Minister's decisions on the bids submitted for support in response to the bidding guidance issued on 12 April 1995, copies of which are in the Library of the House.

Region	*£ million*
London	60–65
South East	12–15
Eastern	3–5
South West	6–8
East Midlands	9–12
West Midlands	20–24
Merseyside	14-17
North West	28–32
Yorks and Humberside	30–34
North East	28–32

Property Services Agency

Mr. Fatchett: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out, on the latest available figures, by company *(a)* the money received from the sale of the Property Services Agency and *(b)* the cost of redundancy and early retirement following the sale of the agency. [28394]

Sir Paul Beresford *[holding answer 14 June 1995]:* Six Property Services Agency businesses were sold. The information requested is as follows:

(a) Money received from the sale[1]

£ million

Building Management businesses (BM)	*(i) From purchases (including some phased payments)*	*(ii) From recovery of trade debts*[3]
PSA Projects	[2]–49.6	55.0
SE/S and W	10.4	69.4
Scotland	3.5	11.2
Manchester	–11.5	17.9
North East	8.0	13.7

[1] The Building Management businesses were sold on the basis of a net value of £2. Following post sale completion audits, the cash assets in the businesses were subject to adjustment to achieve this. Adjusting payments made by Government:
PSA Projects: (not yet agreed)
BM SE/S and W: £5.9 million
BM Scotland: £0.7 million
BM Manchester: £3.6 million
BM North East: £2.8 million

[2] This reflects an additional payment made on the first anniversary of the sale to compensate the purchaser for a shortfall in the transferred staff numbers.

[3] The assets represented by the debts owed to the businesses were not sold to the purchasers of the businesses but were released by the Department separately.

(b) Redundancy costs incurred by Government to date within the agreed limits of its liability under the severance sharing schemes agreed to sale

£ million

Building Management businesses (BM)	*(i) Costs in making seconded civil servants redundant at the end of their secondments*	*(ii) Contributions made to the privatised companies' costs in making transferred employees redundant*
PSA Projects	34.7	2.9
South East	24.7	0.4
S and W	23.9	0
Scotland	13.2	0.3
Manchester	17.4	1.2
North East	25.1	0.8

International Bodies (Meetings)

Mr. Booth: To ask the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will report on the outcome of the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development in April this year and of the governing council of the United Nations Environment Programme in May. [29351]

Mr. Gummer: I attended the high level segments of both meetings. The Commission on Sustainable Development reached agreement on the establishment of an intergovernmental panel on the protection and sustainable management of the world's forests. The CSD also provided ample evidence of the efforts being made across the world at national and local levels to implement agenda 21. A number of countries, including the United Kingdom, made presentations of their experience in developing a national strategy for sustainable development. Copies of the United Kingdom's report to the CSD were presented and copies have been placed in the Library.

The governing council of the United Nations Environment Programme approved a refocused work programme and agreed to continue its mandate as the world's environment voice. The United Kingdom was instrumental in setting in train a review of UNEP's

governing structure. The executive director has been given the responsibility to produce options for reform to be considered at the next governing council in 1997. The United Kingdom also took the initiative in sponsoring a decision which invites UNEP to introduce green housekeeping measures and to urge the remainder of the United Nations system to follow its example.

TRANSPORT

Executive Agencies

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library *(a)* copies of report produced as part of the prior options reviews of the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, the Driving Standards Agency and the Vehicle Certification Agency evaluating the performance of each agency during its first few years and *(b)* copies of the agencies' revised framework documents. [29349]

Mr. Norris: Copies of these documents have now been placed in the Library.

Efficiency Scrutiny

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make an announcement about the report of the efficiency scrutiny of the Department of Transport's traffic area network. [29350]

Mr. Norris: The report of the efficiency scrutiny will be presented on 16 June. I will place a copy in the Library of the House.

Traffic Congestion, Newbury

Mr. Rendel: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from the Chancellor of the Exchequer regarding the cost to the economy of traffic congestion in Newbury. [27051]

Mr. Watts: None.

Rolling Stock

Sir Keith Speed: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assessment he has made of the safety and structural integrity of the older rolling stock used on lines with third rail electrification following recent railway accidents in the south-east. [28321]

Mr. Watts: There is no question of older rolling stock being inherently unsafe. Part I of the report of the inquiry into the recent accident near Cowden, Kent, published last week, recommended a programme of research into the practicability of improving the crashworthiness of certain designs of rolling stock. British Rail is considering this recommendation and will respond to the Health and Safety Executive.

Mr. Spellar: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what is the current position on the replacement of rolling stock on Network SouthEast. [28449]

Mr. Watts: Following the series of Networker and Networker Turbo orders of recent years, 164 Networker Express vehicles are currently under construction by ABB for replacement of rolling stock in the former NSE area. I understand that, in response to BR's recent invitation to tender for further replacement vehicles, non-compliant responses were received. The three passenger rolling stock leasing companies, which are to be sold later this year, will seek commercial opportunities for the further replacement of stock as it becomes life-expired.

Rail Privatisation

Mr. Wallace: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to his answer to the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) of 23 March, *Official Report*, columns *318-19*, if he has yet received from the franchising director the proposed criteria for determining appropriate service specifications for loss-making services; and if he will arrange for their publication in due course. [28836]

Mr. Watts: The franchising director is developing these criteria. When they have been approved by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State a copy will be placed in the Library of the House.

Catamarans

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what are the evacuation procedures for ro-ro ferries and high-speed catamaran passenger craft using British ports. [28709]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 15 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the evacuation procedures for ro-ro ferries and high speed catamaran passenger craft using British ports.

Evacuation procedures are, in principle, the same for all passenger ships. They commence with the general emergency alarm signal whereupon passengers and crew follow emergency instructions. For passengers these will include assembly at the muster stations and thereafter, if it is decided to abandon ship, further direction to the survival craft, wearing lifejackets. Thereafter, they will embark into survival craft—lifeboats and liferafts—in accordance with instructions.

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many passengers can be carried by the largest high-speed catamaran passenger craft operating from a United Kingdom port. [28708]

Mr. Norris: This is an operational matter for the Marine Safety Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from R. M. Bradley to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 15 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your Question about the passenger capacity of the largest high speed catamaran operating from a United Kingdom port.

The CONDOR II operates between Weymouth and the Channel Islands and can carry 674 passengers.

Lorry Ban, London

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what evaluation he has undertaken of the likely effects on *(a)* night-time noise levels and *(b)* levels of particulate matter in the ambient air of his

Department's proposals to abolish the London night-time and weekend lorry ban. [28667]

Mr. Norris: The clear intention of our proposals to enhance the London lorry ban is to improve noise and emission levels. The extent of any improvement has not been formally assessed.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list all areas within *(a)* his Department, *(b)* agencies under his Department's control and *(c)* organisations for which he has ministerial responsibility to which Crown immunity applies; what consideration he has given to removing this; and if he will make a statement. [28645]

Mr. Norris: The Department and its executive agencies act on behalf of the Crown, and are therefore not bound except where there are statutory provision to this effect or necessary implication. Non-departmental public bodies for which I have responsibilities are not part of the Crown and do not benefit from Crown immunity.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many written parliamentary questions were tabled for answer by his Department in each of the past five years; how many of these were not answered because the information *(a)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, *(b)* was not held centrally and *(c)* was not normally disclosed; how many of these could now be answered due to computerisation, more effective and efficient operational systems or more open government; and if he will list each question along with the name and constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member who originally tabled it.

Mr. Norris: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what percentage of parliamentary questions, which would have been answered directly by him or his Ministers prior to the establishment of executive agencies, are now referred to the chief executive of such an agency. [28495]

Mr. Norris: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Motorway Barriers

Sir Anthony Grant: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what study his Department has made into the rival merits of steel and concrete as barriers in motorways; and if he will make a statement. [28295]

Mr. Watts: This is an operational matter for the Highways Agency. I have asked its chief executive to write to my hon. Friend.

Letter from Lawrie Haynes to Sir Anthony Grant, dated 15 June 1995:

As you know, the Minister for Railways and Roads, Mr. John Watts, has asked me to reply to your Parliamentary Question, asking the Secretary of State for Transport what study his Department has made into the rival merits of steel and concrete as barriers on motorways.

All steel safety fences and concrete safety barriers deployed on our network fully meet the performance requirements for vehicle restraints which are set down in the Manual for Contract Documents for Highway Works (MCHW). The criteria for their use are contained in Departmental Standards TD 19/85 and TD 32/93.

A suitable design for concrete barriers which meets the performance requirements for high-speed motorways and trunk roads was not developed until 1989. There has not yet been sufficient length laid nor has sufficient time elapsed to enable a comprehensive appraisal to be made of their performance in service compared with steel. However, more concrete barriers are planned to be installed and we will continue to monitor their performance in service.

Coastguard Service

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if incident reports of emergencies aboard North sea oil rigs have been marked not for public reference by *(a)* the Coastguard Agency or *(b)* his Department; [27891]

(2) how many staff are employed at the auxiliary coastguard station in the Outer Skerries and how many of these staff are fully trained in cliff-rescue; [27879]

(3) what assessment he had made of the improvements to safety which would be afforded by a dedicated operator covering the 2182 frequency if incidents involving man overboard are classified as a mayday situation; and if he will make a statement; [27889]

(4) how the coastguard emergency trailer operated by the auxiliary coastguard station in the Outer Skerries is moved; and if the private vehicles owned by auxiliary coastguards are insured for moving the trailer; [27881]

(5) if, during the incident off St. Kilda involving the vessel Aeolus there was an immediate scramble of search and rescue units; if the policy being advocated by Falmouth marine rescue co-ordination centre in respect of the number of hits validated was actioned; what delay occurred to the search and rescue response; if the mayday was received on the VHF distress frequency; and at what time the lifeboat was launched; [27885]

(6) if he will list the incidents requiring coastguard assistance involving oil rigs in the North sea for each of the last five years; [27890]

(7) what estimate he has made of how long it would take *(a)* to get a helicopter to the scene of the incident, *(b)* a lifeboat to get to the scene of the incident and be able to carry out a rescue and *(c)* for a qualified sector officer to arrive, following a vessel running around in the Outer Skerries; and what is the contingency plan when the helicopter cannot launch due to the severity of the weather; [27878]

(8) whether the mayday message apparently received by a North sea oil rig in respect of the "Heather Bloom" incident off Shetland was passed on to the coastguard; and if he will make a statement; [27888]

(9) how long it would take to muster a cliff rescue team for an incident that occurred in the Outer Skerries; [27880]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Ms Joan Walley, dated 15 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions as these questions deal with operational matters, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

PQ 1929/94/95 HM Coastguard's situation reports are official working messages to bodies dealing with maritime emergencies. They are normally copied to Lloyds casualty information service. It is usual practice for these messages to be headed "for information not for publication" if the subject is an offshore installation. This is to avoid causing unnecessary anxiety to the relatives of those working offshore.

PQ 1933/94/95 Two Auxiliary Coastguards form a Coastguard Initial Response Unit on the Outer Skerries. Neither are trained in cliff rescue since there are no cliffs as such on the islands.

PQ 1936/94/95 HM Coastguard instigate the same immediate and full search and rescue response when a person is reported overboard regardless of whether the word "Mayday" or other radio *proword* such as "Panpan" (the urgency signal) are used.

From 1 July 1995, HM Coastguard will take over direct responsibility for the 2182khz distress watch from British Telecom Maritime Services (BT MRS). The Distress Watch will be maintained at ten designated Rescue Centres. In addition, a further ten Rescue Centres will carry out a similar watch, with instructions to respond to distress, urgency or safety calls if no response is heard from one of the designated rescue centres. These watch arrangements will be at least as effective as those currently provided by BT MRS.

PQ 1938/94/95 There is no Coastguard emergency trailer in the Out Skerries.

PO 1941/94/95 Attempts to contact vessels in the area and to scramble the Coastguard helicopter were made immediately. No vessels responded initially, and the appalling weather conditions delayed the helicopter's take-off.

The policy advocated by Falmouth MRCC was not actioned.

No Mayday was received on the VHF distress frequency. No lifeboat was launched: it would have been inappropriate to do so. The nearest lifeboat would have taken over four hours to arrive on scene.

PQ 1944/94/95 HM Coastguard was involved in providing assistance to offshore oil installations as follows:

Year	*Number of incidents*
1990	57
1991	54
1992	62
1993	71
1994	66
1995 up to 22 May	32

Details of these incidents could only be listed at disproportionate cost.

PQ 1951/94/95 The Sumburgh Coastguard helicopter will arrive within a maximum of 35 minutes by day and 65 minutes by night. The Lerwick RNLI lifeboat would take about 80 minutes to arrive. A Coastguard Sector Officer would not normally be required at the scene of an offshore incident. If a Coastguard officer were to attend they would be transported by helicopter or lifeboat: timings would depend on the circumstances.

In the event that the Sumburgh-based Coastguard helicopter could not get airborne due to exceptionally severe weather conditions other search and rescue units would be tasked. RNLI Lifeboats are based at Lerwick and Aith in Shetland; other helicopters are available at RAF Lossiemouth, and in the Brent Field.

PQ 1953/94/95 The distress message was passed to HM Coastguard in the normal manner, but with a 55 minute delay—not in any way attributable to HM Coastguard. Immediately upon receipt of the distress message Aberdeen Coastguard commenced search and rescue action. Five members of the HEATHER BLOOM'S crew were rescued from liferafts, but the vessel's skipper was tragically lost.

PQ 1954/94/95 On the infrequent occasions that a back up response team might be required this would take forty minutes by day and eighty five minutes at night.

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment he has made of the adequacy of the distress frequency on 2182 kHz; and if he will make a statement; [28126]

(2) what were the staffing levels of coastguard services and the total budget given to coastguard services for rescue services, including equipment allowances in each year since 1979; and what was the cost in each year per person assisted; [28125]

(3) how many incidents at sea were reported; and how many people were rescued by coastguard services in each year since 1986. [28124]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Ms Joan Walley, dated 15 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions as these questions deal with operational matters, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

PQ 1979/94/95

Calender year	*Total number of incidents*	*Total number assisted rescued*
1986	5,300	8,960
1987	5,563	8,867
1988	6,261	11,132
1989	6,835	11,466
1990	7,076	13,474
1991	7,212	13,048
1992	8,533	14,628
1993	9,592	17,106
1994	10,409	16,627

"Assisted" here means those persons remaining on board a vessel until the end of the incident. Those taken off the vessel or recovered from the sea by SAR services are "rescued". The figures quoted also include the number of incidents reported and the number of persons rescued on the shoreline for which Coastguard also has responsibility.

PO 1982/94/95

The distress watch on 2182khz is at present carried out by British Telecom Maritime Radio Service (BT MRS) under contract to the Coastguard Agency. The watch is carried out entirely satisfactorily. From 1 July the watch will be taken over by HM Coastguard. An independent technical assessment of the Medium Frequency equipment HMCG will use for the 2182khz distress watch was carried out by GEC Marconi. This assessment found that HMCG could provide a service at least as good as that provided by BT MRS. Some modifications to the existing equipment to improve coverage are currently being undertaken by HMCG. I am satisfied that the high standard of distress watchkeeping in the UK will be maintained.

PQ 1981/94/95

The information requested for the staffing levels of coastguard services is only readily available from 1983 and is detailed below:

Year	*HMCG uniformed staff*
1983	543
1984	544
1985	533
1986	523
1987	523
1988	510

Year	HMCG uniformed staff
1989	489
1990	469
1991	484
1992	485
1993	482
1994	477
1995	460

The information requested for Her Majesty's Coastguard budgets is available for 1990–91 onwards from our own records. A search of records held by the Department of Transport indicates that the budget figures for earlier years are not readily available.

Year	Total HMCG budget £000
1990–91	29,874
1991–92	33,778
1992–93	37,864
1993–94	38,951
1994–95	38,328
1995–96	40,086

Year	£ cost per person assisted/rescued
1990–91	2,235
1991–92	2,513
1992–93	2,483
1993–94	2,293
1994–95	2,400

These figures are calculated on a notional basis by dividing the number of persons assisted/rescued by the total costs of HMCG; they do not include those of the other rescue services such as the RNLI and MoD.

Ferries

Mr. Flynn: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) how many similar exercises have taken place following the FEREX 86 ferry exercise; how many passengers were involved in each exercise and what proportion of them were able-bodied; how long it took for all passengers to reach the lifeboats in each exercise; and how long it took for each evacuation to be completed; [28707]

(2) how many passengers were evacuated in the ferry exercise FEREX 86; how many of these were able-bodied and how long it took *(a)* for all the passengers to reach the lifeboats and *(b)* for the evacuation to be completed. [28710]

Mr. Norris: These are operational matters for the Coastguard Agency. I have asked the chief executive to write to the hon. Member.

Letter from C. J. Harris to Mr. Paul Flynn, dated 15 June 1995:

The Secretary of State for Transport has asked me to reply to your recent Parliamentary Questions as these deal with operational matters, for which I have responsibility as Chief Executive.

PQ 2007/94/95 98 passengers were evacuated in the ferry exercise FEREX 86. All of the passengers were able-bodied.

The controlled evacuation, testing a variety of exercise scenarios, took two hours to disembark the 98 passengers as each lifeboat and helicopter carried out detailed tasks in slow time in order to allow careful evaluation of the problems associated with the evacuation.

Had the Master of "THE VIKING" been required to implement full evacuation procedures in a real emergency the evacuation could have been carried out in a shorter time.

PQ 2014/94/95 From records that are readily available the following ferry evacuation exercises have taken place since FEREX 86 (details of exercises from November 1992 were provided in reply to PQ 1811/94/95:

FERREVAC
SEALINK EXERCISE
MANCHEX 88
COMMON AIM 2
SEAVAC
MANCHEX 90
LYONESSE 91
MANCHEX 91
CELTIC LIFT
POLACAP
SOLFIREX

Information on these exercises is not available in the form requested.

British Rail Rolling Stock

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of British Rail rolling stock was *(a)* less than five years old, *(b)* between six and 10 years old, *(c)* between 11 and 20 years old, *(d)* between 21 and 30 years old and *(e)* over 30 years old as of 1 January.

Mr. Watts: Information in the form requested is not readily available.

British Rail Shares

Ms Glenda Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what is his estimate of the loss of revenue to the Exchequer resulting from the special tax rules contained in paragraph 11, schedule 24 to the Finance Act 1994, as applied to the transfer of shares from the British Railways Board to a private franchise; [28668]

(2) what is his estimate of the loss of revenue to the Exchequer resulting from the special tax rules contained in paragraph 8, schedule 24 to the Finance Act 1994, as applied to the transfer of shares from the British Railways Board capital gains tax group to a private franchise; [28669]

(3) what is his estimate of the loss of revenue to the Exchequer resulting from the decision to exempt the transfer of shares from the British Railways Board to a private franchise from value added tax. [28670]

Mr. Watts: None.

Shipping Companies

Ms Walley: To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the shipping companies in receipt of financial assistance from the Government. [27863]

Mr. Norris: This information is available only at disproportionate cost.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Central Office of Information

Mr. Pickles: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what targets have been set for the Central Office of Information in 1995–96. [29536]

Mr. Horam: The Central Office of Information has five key targets for the 1995–96 financial year. They are:

(i) to break even in modified historical cost terms after recovering all costs, including interest on borrowings;

(ii) to achieve a 3 per cent. reduction in unit cost of output in real terms, while maintaining suitable levels of quality;

(iii) to equal or better the proportion of work delivered in accordance with client specification during 1994–95;

(iv) to equal or better the proportion of work delivered on time during 1994–95; and

(v) to achieve an average score of 7.9 out of 10 for the COI customer satisfaction index.

Standards in Public Life

Mrs. Ann Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster when he expects to publish the Government's detailed response to the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life to which he referred in his oral answer of 12 June, *Official Report*, column 495. [29156]

Mr. David Hunt: Before the summer recess, as I told the House on 18 May, *Official Report*, column 493.

Investment in Science

Mr. David Shaw: To ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what response the Government intend to make to the fourth report of the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee, "HL 36 Session 1993/4, on international investment in United Kingdom science". [29159]

Mr. David Hunt: The Government response to the House of Lords Select Committee's report is published today. Copies are available in the Libraries of both Houses. The Government are most grateful to the Committee for its thoughtful and detailed report.

HEALTH

Health Visitors

Sir Richard Body: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many health visitors there were in England and Wales for each of the last three years; and what is her estimate of the number for the current year. [27331]

Mr. Sackville: The latest available information relating to England is shown in the table.

Health visitors in England
as at 30 September of each year

	Number of health visitors
1991	10,380
1992	10,250
1993	10,190

Note: Figures are whole-time equivalents rounded to the nearest ten.
Source: Non-Medical Workforce Census.

Figures do not include health visitors who work as practice nurses.

Information relating to Wales is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Influenza Vaccination

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for each family health services authority area what is the percentage of the elderly in receipt of influenza vaccination each year for the last five years. [27922]

Mr. Sackville: This information is not available centrally.

Mr. Bayley: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what measures she is taking to ensure that general practitioners promote the highest possible take-up of influenza vaccination by elderly patients on their lists; and what target she has set for influenza vaccination coverage for this group of patients. [27923]

Mr. Sackville: The chief medical officer will be reminding general practitioners in the next edition of "CMO's Update", which is circulated to all doctors, of the groups of patients for whom annual influenza immunisation is recommended and that now is the time to start planning, if they have not already done so. Further information will be issued in September.

Influenza immunisation is recommended for those of any age who are at especial risk by virtue of underlying disease such as chronic heart or lung disease, and for those in residential accommodation. The aim is to increase uptake year by year, but no specific target for influenza vaccine coverage has been set.

Blood Transfusion Services

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list those blood transfusion services that have undertaken studies into the option of privatisation; what has been the result of their surveys; and if she will make a statement. [28258]

Mr. Sackville: The National Blood Authority, which is responsible for our blood services, has no plans to investigate the possibility of privatising any of its centres.

NHS Authorities and Trusts

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Health for what reasons candidates for the post of *(a)* chairman, *(b)* non-executive director and *(c)* other management positions of health authorities and trusts are not obliged to disclose personal histories of (i) bankruptcy and (ii) criminal behaviour. [28255]

Mr. Malone: I refer the hon. Member to the replies that I gave him on 26 April, *Official Report* column *552*, and on 2 May, *Official Report* column *173*. Candidates for appointment to national health service authority or trust boards are under an obligation to disclose information that might affect their eligibility for appointment, including any relating to bankruptcy and/or a criminal record.

Temazepam

Mrs. Liddell: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to implement the recommendations in the report of the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, 1991, in respect of the control of the use of temazepam. [28282]

Mr. Bowis: The Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs made recommendations to Ministers regarding temazepam in July 1993 and I refer the hon. Member to the reply my right hon. Friend the Lord President of the Council gave my hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Gallie) on 10 May, column *756*.

Children in Care

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many children are currently in care because of the imprisonment of one or both of their parents. [28226]

Mr. Bowis: The most recent information available centrally relates to 31 March 1994, when it is estimated that 380 children were looked after by local authorities in England because one or both parents were in prison—on remand or sentenced.

Compulsory Competitive Tendering

Mr. Nicholas Brown: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will place in the Library a list of all contracts for non-clinical services worth £100,000 or more that have been awarded by national health service trusts under the compulsory competitive tendering process. [28999]

Mr. Sackville: This information could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Prescriptions

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health (1) how many prescriptions were issued in 1993 and 1994 for each of the top 100 items; [28908]

(2) if she will publish the list of the top 100 prescription items as sent to the Chester and Ellesmere Port community health council and the provisional 1994 data in the same form. [28909]

Mr. Malone: Information on dispensing volumes and costs for individual preparations is not made public for reasons of commercial confidentiality. Data are shared within the national health service and with clinical and scientific researchers on the understanding that they will not put information into the public domain which breaches the confidentiality guidelines in anyway.

Mr. Miller: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what has been the increase in the total net ingredient cost for the top 100 prescription items; and if she will make a statement. [28910]

Mr. Malone: The total net ingredient cost of the 100 prescriptions with the largest number of prescription items in 1993 was £909 million, and of the 100 preparations with the largest numbers of items in 1994, based on provisional figures, was £941 million. The preparations which comprise the top 100 vary from year to year.

Ovarian Cancer

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health what plans she has to set up regular screening for women at high risk of ovarian cancer. [28639]

Mr. Sackville: We have no immediate plans. A research programme at the Royal Hospitals national health service trust is currently being evaluated in a randomised trial involving 120,000 women which incorporates tumour markers as a primary screen followed by ultrasonography as a secondary test in women with abnormal tumour marker results. Another study is using ultrasound as a primary screening test. Any screening test must have high sensitivity and specificity and we welcome well designed trials of new and existing screening techniques which will help us decide upon appropriate national policies. When an effective test is available, we will consider the establishment of a national screening programme.

Private Sector Employees

Mrs. Beckett: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many private sector employees have been seconded to work in *(a)* the NHS executive, *(b)* regional offices, *(c)* her Department and *(d)* elsewhere in the NHS. [28642]

Mr. Sackville: There are no private sector employees seconded to work in the national health service executive or regional offices. We do, however, have one such secondee elsewhere in the Department of Health. Statistics on private sector employees seconded to work elsewhere in the NHS are not available centrally.

Children Act 1989

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Health if she will list for each year since the implementation of the Children Act 1989 the number of child abuse investigations undertaken in total and the outcomes broken down into *(a)* court action under provisions of the Act, *(b)* entries on an at risk register, *(c)* informal supervision and *(d)* no further action. [28894]

Mr. Bowis: Information collected centrally relates only to those child abuse investigations that result in an initial stage child protection conference. Figures on children placed on registers—and associated legal status including court orders for those on registers at 31 March—and on those subject to initial stage conferences which did not lead to registration are published annually in "Children and young people on child protection registers, year ending 31 March 19XX, England", copies of which are available in the Library.

Adoption

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many of the adoptions in 1993 were adoptions by step-parents. [27845]

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

The question concerns specific operational matter in which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from M. D. Huebner to Mrs. Helen Jackson, dated 14 June 1995:

PQ: 95/592 Step Parent Adoptions

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your question about the number of step-parent adoptions in 1993.

Of the 6,812 adoption orders made in 1993 in the magistrates courts, the county courts and the High Court, 3,202 (47%) were in favour of the step-parents.

Mrs. Helen Jackson: To ask the Secretary of State for Health how many applications to adopt were made in 1993 in total; and how many of these were applications by step-parents. [27846]

Mr. John M. Taylor: I have been asked to reply.

The question concerns a specific operational matter on which the chief executive of the Court Service is best placed to provide an answer and I have accordingly asked the chief executive to reply direct.

Letter from M. D. Huebner to Mrs. Helen Jackson, dated 14 June 1995:

PQ: 95/591 ADOPTION APPLICATIONS

The Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Department, has asked me to reply to your question about the number of adoption applications made in 1993.

The total number of adoption applications in the magistrates courts, the county courts and the High Court in 1993 was 7,813. Of these, 4,095 (52%) were made by step-parents.

TREASURY

Exchange Rates

13. **Mr. Win Griffiths:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the impact of changes in the pound/ecu exchange rate on payment into *(a)* the EU budget and *(b)* the European development fund budget since 1992. [27045]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Broadly speaking, exchange rate movements increased our payments into the Community budget in 1993 but reduced them in 1994. The effect in the present year is expected to be small.

The impact of changes in exchange rates on our payments into the European development fund depends on the timing of these payments.

Single European Currency

14. **Mr. Fabricant:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what discussions have been held about the implications of a single European currency for title in respect of foreign and gold reserves of individual EU member states; and if he will make a statement. [27046]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: The treaty on European Union requires member states joining the monetary union to transfer part of their reserves to the European central bank, receiving in exchange an equivalent claim on the ECB. The precise arrangements for the ownership of foreign exchange reserves in stage three of economic and monetary union are among the many technical issues that will have to be decided during stage two.

Value Added Tax

15. **Mr. Duncan:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what steps he is taking to simplify VAT legislation. [27047]

Mr. Heathcoat Amory: I announced earlier today that Customs and Excise has set up a special team, as part of the Government's wider deregulation drive, to review its current legislation with a view to rationalising and simplifying it over the next three years.

Personal Taxation

16. **Mr. Spring:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his plans for reform of personal taxation. [27048]

20. **Mr. Jacques Arnold:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his plans for the reform of personal taxation. [27055]

Mr. Harry Greenway: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are his plans for reform of personal taxation, and if he will make a statement. [27300]

Sir George Young: The Government remain committed to low rates of personal tax and will cut taxes again when economic conditions are right and public finances can afford it.

Devaluation

17. **Mr. Cohen:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by what percentage the pound has devalued since April 1992; and what assessment he has made of the adverse effects of the devaluation. [27049]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Sterling is currently 16 per cent. lower on a trade-weighted basis than it was in April 1992. Over the same period, the economy has grown by over 8 per cent. in real terms. But inflation has averaged just 3 per cent. This enviable combination of strong growth and low inflation is a result of the Government's sound monetary and prudent fiscal policies.

Investment

18. **Mr. Rathbone:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer by how much investment by the machinery and equipment industries has changed within the past 12 months. [27052]

Mr. Aitken: Investment by machinery and equipment industries rose by almost 19 per cent. in real terms in the year to the first quarter of 1995.

Personal Equity Plans

Mr. Matthew Banks: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when the new regulations extending personal equity plans to corporate bonds will be introduced. [29408]

Sir George Young: The regulations extending PEPs to certain corporate bonds, preference shares and convertibles have been laid before Parliament today and will come into force on 6 July. [29408]

Share Option Schemes

19. **Mr. Gordon Prentice:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what assessment he has made of the value for money provided by share option schemes for *(a)* the individuals, *(b)* the companies concerned and *(c)* the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: The assessment of the value for money provided by share option schemes is best made by companies and their shareholders.

Economic and Finance Council

21. **Mr. Enright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what recent discussions he has held in ECOFIN on European monetary union. [27056]

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: EU economic and finance Ministers discussed various aspects of the technical preparatory work for stage three of economic and monetary union at their informal meeting in Versailles on 8 April. The European Commission's Green Paper on the transition to a single currency was discussed over lunch at ECOFIN on 22 May.

Government Borrowing

22. **Mr. Miller:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the guidelines for Government borrowing. [27057]

Mr. Aitken: The guidelines for Government borrowing were set out in the debt management report published by HM Treasury on 30 March 1995, which included the gilt funding remit issued to the Bank of England for 1995–96, and in the remit to the department of national savings for 1995–96, announced on 31 March 1995, *Official Report* at column *866*.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the general Government borrowing requirement defined so as to exclude revenues from sales of land and buildings and privatisation receipts, as a percentage of gross domestic product for each year since 1979 until 1997–98. [28159]

Mr. Aitken: The table sets out the information requested:

General government borrowing requirement (GGBR) excluding privatisation proceeds and net sales of land and buildings, as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP)

Percentage of GDP	*GGBR*	*GGBR ex privatisation proceeds*	*GGBR ex privatisation proceeds and net sales of buildings*[1 2]
1979–80	5	5	5½
1980–81	5¾	5¾	6
1981–82	3¼	3¼	4
1982–83	3½	3½	4¼
1983–84	3¼	3¼	3¾
1984–85	2¾	3½	4
1985–86	2	2¾	3½
1986–87	1¼	2½	3
1987–88	-½	¾	1½
1988–89	-2½	-1	0
1989–90	-1¼	-½	½
1990–91	0	¾	1½
1991–92	2½	3¾	4
1992–93	6¼	7½	7¾
1993–94	7¼	8¼	8½
1994–95	5½	6½	—
1995–96	3½	3½	—
1996–97	2	2½	—
1997–98	1	1¼	—

[1] Outturn data for general government sales of land and buildings in 1994–95 is not currently available.

[2] Forecasts for sales of land and buildings by local authorities are not available.

Housing Market

24. **Sir Michael Neubert:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what further fiscal or other measures he plans to introduce to stimulate the housing market. [27059]

Sir George Young: We fully recognise the importance of encouraging a stable and health housing market. The best help that any Government can give the housing market is to deliver sustainable economic growth, based on low inflation and sound public finances. The Government are doing precisely that. Furthermore, the combined effect of changes in interest rates and mortgage interest relief since October 1990 has been to make the average mortgage holder £130 a month better off.

Bank of England

25. **Dr. Wright:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on his relations with the Governor of the Bank of England. [27060]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Governor and I are both committed to achieving permanently low inflation.

Inflation

26. **Mr. Pawsey:** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out his strategy for maintaining low inflation over the next three years. [27061]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I will continue to set interest rates in order to ensure that inflation remains permanently low.

Executive Pay

Mrs. Roche: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about pay levels and share options for executives within privatised industry. [27058]

Sir George Young: Remuneration is a matter for companies and their shareholders. The Greenbury committee is reviewing best practice for companies and we will consider the need for any Government measures, if appropriate, in the light of its conclusions.

Monetary Union

Sir Teddy Taylor: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he was previously aware of the letters circulated by the inquiry on Britain and the single currency, a copy of which has been sent to him, advising that Lord Kingsdown had been invited by him to chair the inquiry; and if he will make a statement; [28348]

(2) on what basis persons were selected by the Kingsdown committee on a single currency to give evidence; and if he was consulted by the committee on its stated desire to aim to produce a report which would have public appeal. [28349]

Mr. Kenneth Clarke *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* The Action Centre for Europe's main activity is to commission and publish original papers by independent academic and other experts on key topics relating to the European Union, with a view to stimulating public discussion. ACE set up a working group on the implications of monetary union for Britain and the Kingsdown report, published on 8 June, records its findings. As a member of ACE I suggested to Lord

Kingsdown that as a former Governor of the Bank of England he would be well placed to chair an ACE working group. I was in no way involved in the drafting of the report, which reflects solely the views of the authors.

Self-employment

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will list the main groups of workers which, according to statute law, are treated for tax purposes as self-employed but for national insurance purposes as employed; [28333]

(2) in what circumstances a taxpayer may assume that a determination by the Inland Revenue that, according to case law, a person is self-employed may be taken as applicable to tax liability and national insurance contributions. [28341]

Sir George Young: There is no statutory definition of self-employment. Both the Inland Revenue and the Department of Social Security use criteria derived from the case law of the courts. They operate a common approach to employment status. This means that where one department has made a written decision following a full investigation of the circumstances, this will normally be accepted by the other department provided all the relevant facts have been accurately and clearly disclosed and the circumstances remain the same.

The exceptions are as follows:

(i) Section 314 Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1988 deems that certain divers are treated as self employed for tax purposes. The normal case law approach applies for National Insurance.

(ii) The Social Security (Categorisation of Earners) Regulations provide that particular groups of workers should be treated as employees whilst the Inland Revenue follow the normal case law approach. In these cases it may mean that the national insurance treatment differs from the tax treatment. The following groups of workers are affected:

Office Cleaners

Ministers of Religion

Part time or visiting lecturers, teachers or instructors

Persons employed by their spouse

Mr. French: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will set out the differences between Inland Revenue leaflet IR56/N139 and previous leaflets since 1979 as they relate to the criteria for determining whether a person is employed or self-employed. [28340]

Sir George Young: Leaflet IR56/N139 has been updated on a number of occasions since its introduction in 1985. The latest version was published on 31 May 1995 and contains additional criteria relating to short-term engagements in the light of recent case law

Public Sector Borrowing

Mr. Malcolm Bruce: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his estimate of the impact on his forecasts of the public sector borrowing requirement in *(a)* 1995–96, *(b)* 1996–97 and *(c)* 1997–98 of a 0.25 per cent. annual reduction in the Treasury forecast of the rate of growth of United Kingdom gross domestic product for the aforementioned years. [28157]

Mr. Aitken *[holding answer 14 June 1995]:* Tables 4.10 and 4.11 in the 1995–96 "Financial Statement and Budget Report" illustrate the sensitivity of projections for the public sector borrowing requirement to alternative growth paths.

Retirements and Redundancies

Ms Hodge: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many staff of *(a)* the Treasury and *(b)* agencies for which the Treasury is responsible (i) took early retirement, (ii) took voluntary redundancy, (iii) took compulsory redundancy and (iv) were retired on medical grounds in *(a)* 1993–94 and *(b)* 1994–95; and what are the projected figures for 1995–96. [25418]

Mr. Nelson: The information for the Treasury is as follows:

	Voluntary redundancy		*Other early retirement*	*Compulsory redundancy*	*Medical*
	Early retirement	*Severance*			
1993–94	5	2	11	2	3
1994–95	6	10	11	0	11
1995–96	[1]14	[1]3	[1]1	[1]0	[1]1

[1] Figures for 1995–96 are those known at 1 May 1995. The Treasury is not responsible for any agencies.

Ms Hodge: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the annual cost to the Department of staff leaving under redundancy or early retirement schemes to incorporate (i) added years lump sum payment (ii) redundancy payments (iii) pension payments including enhancements and (iv) any other special arrangements for *(a)* 1993–94, *(b)* 1994–95, and projected for *(c)* 1995–96 and *(d)* 1996–97. [25637]

Mr. Nelson: Staff leaving the Treasury under redundancy or early retirement schemes are eligible for compensation payments under the principal civil service pensions scheme. The scheme distinguishes between early retirement, with immediate payments of pensions benefits, and early severance, with immediate payment of lump sum compensation and pension benefits preserved for payment at age 60. Individual payments are age, salary and service related.

The cost to the Department of staff leaving under these schemes are a mixture of benefits payable immediately, which may include compensation lump sum and/or pension, plus cost arising over a longer term—for example, the annual compensation to staff under the age of 60. The table separately identifies these immediate and longer-term costs, so far as they can be determined.

	1993–94 £	*1994–95* £	*1995–96* £
Immediate costs			
Lump sum compensation	130,302	432,195	827,534
Enhancement to lump sum	49,983	64,050	235,266
Longer term costs			
Enhancement to pension[1]	16,659	21,346	78,420
Cost of paying pension per-age 60	729,789	949,143	2,933,485

[1] £ rate p.a.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION

Indonesia

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the nature of the work involved in the steel bridging (phase 1) aid and trade provision project in Indonesia; what equipment and materials were supplied under the project; what is the location of the bridging; which Indonesian companies were involved; and what date the project was completed. [28298]

Mr. Baldry: Phase 1 of the steel bridging project was undertaken to help meet Indonesia's requirements for steel bridging on major roads.

The equipment and materials supplied under the project consisted of 397 spans of 30.5m Bailey bridging, 80 tool kits, 397 sets of spare components, 30 sets of jacking equipment and 30 sets of erection equipment.

The bridging is located in the following provinces: Irja, Maluku, Sulsel, Sulteng, Sultera, Sulut, DKL, Jakarta, Jabar, Jateng, Sumut, Sumbar, Sultra, Riau, Jatim, Aceh, Bengkulu, Kalbar, Kalsel, Kalteng, Kaltim and Sumsel.

The roads and highways department of the Ministry of Public Works BINA MARGA—was responsible for project implementation.

The project was completed in July 1988.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs pursuant to his answer of 1 March, *Official Report*, column *574*, on what date the case for the shortwave radio transmitters project in Indonesia was submitted by the Department of Trade and Industry to the sub-committee for aid and trade; on what date the project was approved by the sub-committee for aid and trade; and on what date the project was approved by the Minister for Overseas Development. [28330]

Mr. Baldry: The project was submitted to the sub-committee for aid and trade in November 1990. It was approved in the same month by both the SCAT and my right hon. and noble Friend, the Minister for Overseas Development.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what was the nature of the work involved in the steel bridging (phase 2) aid and trade provision project in Indonesia; what equipment and materials were supplied under the project; what is the location of the bridging; which Indonesian companies were involved; and on what date the project was completed. [28299]

Mr. Baldry: Phase II of the steel bridging project supplied demountable steel bridging for an on-going bridge repair programme. Approximately 5,000m of steel bridging and spares were supplied.

The bridging is located in the following provinces: South Sulawesi, North Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, East Kalimantan, West Kalimantan, Central Kalimantan, South Kalimantan, North Sumatera, South Sumatera, West Sumatera, Bengkulu, Riau, West Java, Irian Jaya and Maluku.

The roads and highways department of the Ministry of Public Works—BINA MARGA—was responsible for project implementation.

The project was completed in April 1992.

Mrs. Clwyd: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, pursuant to his answer of 1 February, *Official Report*, column *704*, to the hon. Member for Eccles (Miss Lestor), regarding the Indonesian tropical forest management project: sub 4, how many persons were trained at each of the training centres listed in his answer; what private sector bodies submitted personnel for training under the project; and who the Government engaged to carry out the training. [27833]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 14 June 1995]:* Sub-project 4 (training) trains teachers who work at regional centres. One hundred and seventy five teachers have received basic instruction in methodology and curriculum development in Indonesia while a further 37 have received advanced training in the UK.

Member companies of APHI—Indonesia Association Forest Business—also sent personnel for training under the project.

The training of teachers is undertaken by LTS International Ltd in association with the University of Wolverhampton.

Sarawak

Mr. Dalyell: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what help he gives to schemes developing the use of rattan in Sarawak. [26335]

Mr. Baldry *[holding answer 13 June 1995]:* Under the aid programme, we are helping the Government of Malaysia to develop a better understanding of the use of rattan in two main ways. Our support for the Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia includes research on the mapping and conservation of rattan. Under the UK/Malaysia memorandum of understanding on forestry, we are helping to establish forest management systems that include rattan and other non-timber forest products.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Homelessness

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many persons presented themselves as homeless to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in each district council area in each of the last five years. [28217]

Mr. Moss: This is a matter for the Northern Ireland Housing Executive whose chief executive has advised me that the figures are as shown in the table.

Persons presenting as homeless to Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Council Area	*1990–91*	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*	*1994–95*
Antrim Borough	65	44	140	181	211
Ards Borough	481	461	478	412	488
Armagh District	173	147	134	241	271
Ballymena Borough	237	265	286	356	389
Ballymoney Borough	113	148	127	142	103
Banbridge District	157	139	118	133	153

Persons presenting as homeless to Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Council Area	1990–91	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94	1994–95
Belfast City	2,501	2,656	2,558	2,310	2,428
Carrickfergus Borough	99	148	193	161	201
Castlereagh Borough	364	350	364	290	272
Cookstown District	166	213	131	183	146
Coleraine Borough	150	142	181	199	275
Craigavon Borough	265	318	303	263	266
Derry City	832	771	710	858	920
Down District	363	491	589	439	476
Dungannon District	152	199	186	200	197
Fermanagh District	192	209	224	250	304
Larne Borough	173	191	263	267	203
Limavady Borough	197	222	145	206	184
Lisburn Borough	803	1,104	968	848	860
Magherafelt District	96	70	91	124	129
Moyle District	65	59	57	45	59
Newry and Mourne District	421	467	656	618	551
Newtonabbey Borough	561	567	552	452	355
North Down Borough	211	322	239	221	222
Omagh District	223	314	318	240	277
Strabane District	127	64	88	92	128
Total	9,187	10,081	10,099	9,731	10,068

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the total cost to public funds in each of the past three years of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools; and what proposals he has to reduce this cost. [28219]

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

1992–93: £922,906

1993–94: £1,110,986

1994–95: £1,260,932

I am satisfied that the council's allocation are essential to enable it to carry out its responsibilities and I do not have any proposals at present to reduce its level of funding.

Mental Patients

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to bring Northern Ireland legislation on the compulsory detention of mental patients into line with that in Great Britain following the Brian Doherty case; and if he will make a statement. [28221]

Mr. Moss: There are no plans at present to amend the Northern Ireland legislation relating to the compulsory detention of mentally disordered people. The Western health and social services board has set up an independent inquiry into the Brian Doherty case and its report will be studied closely to see what action may be necessary to prevent similar recurrences.

HIV

Mr. John D. Taylor: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how much was spent on programmes in Northern Ireland in each of the last five years aimed at preventing the spread of HIV; what proportion of these amounts was aimed specifically at homosexuals, bisexuals and lesbians; what plans he has to review the overall budget in the light of the increase in foreign tourism to Northern Ireland; and if he will make a statement. [28223]

Mr. Moss: The information is not available in the form requested. Measures to prevent HIV/AIDS are undertaken as part of a wider effort to promote sexual health.

Expenditure by the Health Promotion Agency for Northern Ireland on the promotion of sexual health and the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and grants from the Department of Health and Social Services to voluntary agencies working in this area, were as follows in each of the past five years.

1990–91: £140,703

1991–92: £175,786

1992–93: £242,100

1993–94: £313,095

1994–95: £279,752

The Department of Health and Social Services published its strategy on HIV and AIDS in 1994. The strategy will be kept under review in the light of changing circumstances.

Primary School Closures

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the decision first was taken to close Clare and Ballydougan primary schools and to replace Bleary primary school. [28366]

Mr. Ancram: A scheme to close Ballydougan primary school was approved in April 1966 and the school closed in August 1966. A scheme to close Clare primary school was approved in December 1970 and the school closed in April 1971. A proposal to provide a new replacement school for Bleary primary school was approved by my Department in November 1982.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when the proposal that a new Bleary primary school to cater for those previously served by Clare and Ballydougan primary schools ceased to be classed as a rationalisation scheme. [28367]

Mr. Ancram: The capital scheme for the replacement of Bleary primary school has never been classified as a rationalisation scheme within my Department's school capital planning arrangements which were introduced in 1991.

School Meals

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the number and percentage of children receiving *(a)* free school meals and *(b)* parentally paid-for school meals in each of the last 10 years. [28378]

Mr. Ancram: The information is as follows:

Year	Pupils taking meals	Pupils receiving free meals (percentage of pupil meals)	Pupils paying for meals (percentage of pupil meals)
1984–85	161,096	93,974 (58)	67,122 (42)
1985–86	160,435	94,891 (59)	65,544 (41)
1986–87	164,756	98,233 (60)	66,523 (40)
1987–88	165,387	100,144 (61)	65,243 (39)
1988–89	153,638	73,458 (48)	80,180 (52)
1989–90	155,769	74,416 (48)	81,353 (52)

Year	Pupils taking meals	Pupils receiving free meals (percentage of pupil meals)	Pupils paying for meals (percentage of pupil meals)
1990–91	164,194	77,005 (47)	87,189 (53)
1991–92	167,582	80,882 (48)	86,700 (52)
1992–93	178,271	83,761 (47)	94,510 (53)
1993–94	181,116	85,327 (47)	95,789 (53)

Information Services

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list all the gifts declared by *(a)* the head of information services at the Northern Ireland Office and *(b)* all other press officers at the Northern Ireland Office. [28368]

Sir John Wheeler: The information is as follows:

(a) A Panasonic RF B65D portable radio presented in July 1993 by Downtown Radio to the director. It is for official use within the information service and is held on the inventory of office equipment.

(b) None.

Mr. Trimble: To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what request has been made by the head of information services, Northern Ireland Office, for the monitoring of journalists' telephones. [28369]

Sir John Wheeler: None.

EDUCATION

Education Assistance

Mr. Jamieson: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total current annual cost to public funds of the various Government schemes for sending children to private or independent schools. [27054]

Mr. Robin Squire: The Department's expenditure on the assisted places scheme and the music and ballet schools scheme—which provide means-tested fee remission for certain pupils attending participating independent schools—in England in the financial year 1994–95 was £101.5 million and £6.8 million respectively. Outturn capital and recurrent expenditure in the same year on the 15 city technology colleges—which are also independent schools—was £50.1 million. These figures do not include the purchase of places by local authorities, whether for pupils generally or for those with special educational needs, in independent schools or in nursery establishments. Questions about comparable provision elsewhere in the United Kingdom, or for the children of service men and diplomatic staff, are matters for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State responsible for those areas.

Minority Languages (GCSE)

Mr. Blunkett: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what steps she is taking to ensure that examining boards continue to offer minority languages at GCSE level, with particular reference to eastern European languages. [28478]

Mr. Forth: GCSEs in modern foreign languages for courses starting in September 1996 will be subject to regulations and subject criteria published by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority in March 1995 and designed to align the GCSE with the requirements of the national curriculum.

The Government have been mindful of the implications of the new GCSE criteria for the availability of syllabuses in the less-commonly studied languages, including those from Eastern Europe. The Secretary of State therefore agreed in principle that special arrangements could be made in certain cases, to give the examining groups scope to continue to offer a suitably wide range of language syllabuses.

The SCAA is discussing with the examining groups the detailed arrangements that could be made for individual languages. The decision on what syllabuses to offer is ultimately one for each examining group. An announcement will be made shortly about the range of languages to be offered at GCSE.

Christian Primary School, Croxteth

Mr. Wareing: To ask the Secretary of State if she will make a statement on the current situation in respect of the proposals to provide a Christian primary school on the Croxteth county park estate in Liverpool. [28704]

Mr. Robin Squire: My right hon. Friend hopes to be able to announce a decision on these proposals in the near future.

Assisted Places Scheme

Mr. Hutton: To ask the Secretary of State for Education if she will list the fees charged by each independent school for post-16 years education under the assisted places scheme in 1994–95; and what were the comparable figures for LEA schools, grant-maintained schools and Further Education Funding Council-funded colleges. [28706]

Mr. Robin Squire: Tuition fees for sixth-form pupils supported by the Department's assisted places scheme in each participating school in the academic year 1994–95 are shown a table drawn from the Department's records, a copy of which has been placed in the Library. Comparable unit costs are not separately available for pupils aged 16 to 19 in local education authority maintained schools, grant-maintained schools or Further Education Funding Council-funded institutions.

Advisory Group on School Improvement

Mr. Clappison: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what will be the membership of the new advisory group on school improvement; and if she will make a statement. [29477]

Mr. Forth: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced on 25 May a wide-ranging programme designed to raise standards in all our schools. The programme brings together the work of Government Departments and other agencies of central and local government, and also the resources of universities and schools. I will chair an advisory group which will carry this work forward. Its membership will be as follows:

Mr. Sandy Adamson—Director of Planning at the Funding Agency for Schools

Professor Michael Barber—Professor of Education, Keele University

Ms Julie Barton—Headteacher, Cambridge Special School, Hammersmith

Mrs. Patricia Clarke—Headteacher, Avondale Park Primary School, Kensington

Mrs. Pat Collarbone—Headteacher, Haggerston School, Hackney

Mrs. Heather Du Quesnay—Director of Education, Hertfordshire

Mr. Jim Rose—Director of Inspection, Office for Standards in Education.

Mr. Brian Stevens—Director of External Relations at the British Bankers' Association.

Ms Frankie Sulke—Head of Policy, Teacher Training Agency

The group will assist in co-ordinating the work of the different agencies, and advise the Secretary of State on possible further action to improve schools. The members are appointed for one year, at which point the Secretary of State will review progress made.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what percentage of parliamentary questions, which would have been answered directly by her or her ministers prior to the establishment of executive agencies, are now referred to the chief executive of such an agency. [28487]

Mr. Boswell: Ministers are accountable to Parliament for all matters concerning their agencies. Written parliamentary questions concerning matters which have been delegated to the chief executive of an executive agency in its framework document normally receive a reply from the Minister to the effect that he or she has asked the chief executive to reply direct to the Member by letter. The chief executive's letter is published in *Hansard* after the Minister's reply.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Education how many written parliamentary questions were tabled for answer by her Department in each of the past five years; how many of these were not answered because the information *(a)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, *(b)* was not held centrally and *(c)* was not normally disclosed; how many of these could now be answered now due to computerisation, more effective and efficient operational systems or more open government; and if she will list each question along with the name and constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member who originally tabled it. [28506]

Mr. Boswell: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Teacher Training

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total cost and the average cost per student of the BEd/BAQTS in *(a)* year one, *(b)* year two, *(c)* year three and *(d)* year four on courses in England and Wales. [27994]

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The Teacher Training Agency has notified institutions in England of allocations totalling £104.9 million for the provision of courses of undergraduate initial teacher training in the 1995–96 academic year. This represents an average allocation of £2,610 for each full-time undergraduate place the institutions are contracted to provide. In addition, institutions receive course fees, covered for most students by mandatory awards. In 1995–96, classroom-based undergraduate courses will attract a fee of £750 and laboratory-based courses £1,600. Total fee income for undergraduate courses of initial teacher training is estimated to be £45.5 million, an average fee of £1,140. Courses are funded on the same basis for each year of study.

These figures do not include the costs of student support.

Questions about the funding of initial teacher training in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Pickthall: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what is the total cost and the average cost per student of the PGCE courses in England and Wales. [27995]

Mr. Robin Squire *[holding answer 12 June 1995]:* The Teacher Training Agency has notified institutions in England of allocations totalling £48.6 million for the provision of courses of full-time postgraduate initial teacher training in the 1995–96 academic year. This represents an average allocation of £2,850 for each full-time postgraduate place the institutions are contracted to provide. In addition, institutions receive course fees, covered for most students by mandatory awards. In 1995–96, postgraduate courses will attract a fee of £1,600. Total fee income for postgraduate courses of initial teacher training is estimated to be £27.2 million, an average fee of £1,600.

These figures do not include the costs of student support.

Questions about the funding of initial teacher training in Wales are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Byers: To ask the Attorney-General how many civil servants in his Department are currently working on matters related to the Scott inquiry; if a dedicated unit has been established; and what is the estimated cost to date of civil servants dealing with matters relating to the Scott inquiry. [28864]

The Attorney-General: Work on matters related to the Scott inquiry is undertaken by staff in my Department as part of their normal duties and it is not, therefore, possible to estimate the overall cost. The costs of staff in the Treasury Solicitor's Department providing legal services to client departments in connection with the inquiry are included in charges invoiced to departments. No dedicated units have been established in my Department.

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Attorney-General what legal advice he has sought from solicitors or barristers in respect of draft conclusions reached by the Scott inquiry; what is the estimated cost of such legal expenses to public funds; and if he will make a statement. [28897]

The Attorney-General: The Government do not consider it right to publish the nature or cost of any advice which may have been given to individual witnesses to the Scott inquiry. This is a matter of confidence between them and any legal advisers they may have retained.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Attorney-General if he will list all areas within *(a)* his Department, *(b)* agencies under his Department's control and *(c)* organisations for which he has ministerial responsibility to which Crown immunity applies; what consideration he has given to removing this; and if he will make a statement. [28643]

The Attorney-General: The reference to Crown immunity in the question is understood to refer to legislation which does not apply to the Crown. There are no areas covered by such legislation for which I have responsibility.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Pets

Mr. Hardy: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what advice was given by Her Majesty's Government during the consideration of policy relating to the Council of Europe proposals in regard to pet animals; and what is official policy on this matter. [27916]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: The United Kingdom is not a party to the Council of Europe convention for the protection of pet animals, and no decisions have been taken on whether it would be right to accede to the convention. In deciding this issue, the Government will take full account, among other considerations, of the potential consequences of the resolutions agreed at the recent multilateral consultation of parties to the convention.

Nuclear Bunkers

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list by location the nuclear bunkers that are still waiting to be disposed of; what is the estimated value of each bunker; and if he will list the money raised for each nuclear bunker that has been disposed of. [28264]

Mr. Nicholas Baker: Regional government headquarters still to be disposed of and their values, assessed by the appropriate district valuer's office, are as follows:

	Assessed value £
Shipton, North Yorkshire	50,000 to 200,000
Bedford	270,000
Ashdown Forest, East Sussex	200,000
Soar, Devon	40,000
Chilmark, Wiltshire	District valuer's report awaited
Bridgend, South Wales	District valuer's report awaited

Sites at the following locations have been sold on the open market for the prices indicated:

	£
Lincoln	57,000
Loughborough	150,000
Norwich	165,000
Brentwood, Essex	151,001
Wrexham, North Wales	42,000
Preston	110,010
Nantwich, Cheshire	151,000

A site in Staffordshire and a property in Basingstoke were returned to the Ministry of Defence and to Property Holdings respectively, at no cost. A property at Rugby has been auctioned by the Ministry of Defence for £250,584 and the sale of a property at Hexham, Northumbria, for £1,200,000 has been agreed but not yet completed.

Rape

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of rape were *(a)* reported to the police, *(b)* reached court and *(c)* resulted in a guilty verdict in (i) 1985 and (ii) 1993. [28247]

Mr. Maclean: The available information shows that in England and Wales some 1.842 rape offences were recorded by the police in 1985, and there were 844 prosecutions and 430 convictions for rape offences in that year. The corresponding figures for 1993 are 4,589 offences, 1,704 prosecutions and 465 convictions. Information for Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Police Complaints

Dr. Lynne Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to repeal section 98 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984; and if he will make a statement on his assessment of the impact of section 98 on the building of public confidence in the Police Complaints Authority. [28331]

Mr. Maclean: The Government have already announced their intention to amend section 98, when a suitable legislative opportunity arises, to allow the Police Complaints Authority discretion to publish such information as is reasonably necessary to inform the public of the outcome of investigations, without derogation from the principle of confidentiality between the authority, complaints and those that provide information.

Driving without Insurance

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many of those people convicted of driving without insurance in each of the past three years have been *(a)* under 20 years of age, *(b)* between 20 and 30 years of age and *(c)* over 30 years of age; [28335]

(2) how many people have been convicted of driving without insurance in each of the last three years. [28336]

Mr. Maclean: The following table gives the available information which relates to the number of convictions for "using a motor vehicle uninsured against third party risks" in England and Wales for the years 1991 to 1993. Figures for 1994 are not yet available.

Convictions for using a motor vehicle uninsured against third party risks

Year	Total convictions	Persons aged	
		Under 21	21 and over
1991	225,910	65,093	160,817
1992	246,054	62,434	183,620
1993	281,136	65,813	215,323

Television Licences

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what estimate he has made of the cost of imprisoning television licence defaulters in the years 1985 to 1995. [28227]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. David Hanson, dated 15 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the cost of imprisoning television licence defaulters in the years 1985 to 1995.

Information on the cost of prisoners, according to their type of offence, is not collected centrally. On the basis of the number normally in custody —under 10—we estimate the costs of imprisoning these defaulters to be up to £200,000 a year.

Mr. Hanson: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people were imprisoned in each of the last 10 years for the non-payment of fines relating to a television licence offence. [28228]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from B. Landers to Mr. David Hanson, dated 15 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question asking how many people were imprisoned in each of the last 10 years for the non-payment of fines relating to a television licence offence.

The information requested is given in the table. No information is available for the period before 1991 because the offence was not separately identified in the prison statistics.

Receptions into Prison Service establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of fine imposed for using a television without a licence, 1991 to 1994

Offence	Year			
	1991	1992	1993[1]	1994[1]
Non-payment of fine for using a TV without a licence	394	568	825	763

[1] Provisional information.

Prison Assaults

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what ministerial approval was given to the Director General of the Prison Service to change the current indicator used for recording assaults by prisoners on prison officers and other inmates from one based on adjudications for disciplinary offences to one based on the seriousness of the assault; and what assessment he has made of the effect of the change on the assault figures. [28103]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: The current key performance indicator for assaults in the Prison Service has not been changed. The Prison Service's business plan for 1995–96, which was approved by my right hon. and learned Friend, explains that the Prison Service is developing proposals for new indicators of its performance for introduction in 1996–97. These will include a new measure of serious assaults as a possible replacement for the current indicator which is based on proven adjudications for disciplinary offences relating to assault. Under the terms of the Prison Service's framework document, any such change in the service's key performance indicators will be subject to agreement by the Home Secretary, the director general, the Treasury and the Office of Public Service and Science. The Prison Service will, in any event, continue to collect information about all reported assaults on staff and prisoners and disciplinary proceedings relating to such assaults.

Prison Accommodation

Mr. Mike O'Brien: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department what factors underlie the absence of a key target for the number of prisoners held two to a cell in cells designed for one person. [28080]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Mike O'Brien, dated 15 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the absence of a key target for the number of prisoners held two to a cell designed for one person.

When the Prison Service became an Agency in April 1993, it was agreed that the most serious problem relating to overcrowding was the practice of 'trebling', which involved three prisoners sharing a cell designed for one person. As recently as 1987, over five thousand prisoners were 'trebling'.

The targets set in relation to overcrowding have therefore been to eliminate trebling—which was achieved in March 1994—and to continue to avoid trebling.

However, against the background of the rapid increase in the prison population—from a low of 40,600 in December 1992 to around 51,000 now—and the need to hold unconvicted and unsentenced prisoners close to the courts—which can result in sudden uncontrollable fluctuations in the prison population in local prisons—it is neither feasible nor realistic currently to set a target for reducing the number of prisoners held two to a cell designed for one person. It is, however, a continuing priority to keep overcrowding to a minimum and to eliminate it wherever practicable.

Prisoners (HIV and AIDS)

Mr. Gerrard: To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many cases of HIV and AIDS have been reported in prisons in England and Wales in each year since 1986. [28005]

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Responsibility for this matter has been delegated to the Director General of the Prison Service, who has been asked to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from A. J. Butler to Mr. Neil Gerrard, dated 15 June 1995:

The Home Secretary has asked me, in the absence of the Director General from the office, to reply to your recent Question about the number of cases of HIV and AIDS that have been reported in prisons in England and Wales in each year since 1986.

The information is as follows:

Year	*Cases of HIV (including AIDS)*	*Cases of AIDS*
1986	[1]48	1
1987	75	3
1988	61	3
1989	54	5
1990	59	7
1991	26	1
1992–93[2]	51	7
1993–94	27	2
1994–95	23	—
1995–96[3]	3	—

[1] Figure understates position since 27 other cases were reported in the two years 1985 and 1986, but it is not possible to assign them to a single year.
[2] 15 month period January 1992—March 1993 (to bring table in line with financial year).
[3] Figures for 1995—1996 are as at 30 May 1995.

The table represents the number of new cases of HIV infection confirmed and reported by prison medical officers. The average number of cases in the prison system in England and Wales at any one time has varied between 30 and 70. There are currently 54 prisoners known to have HIV, confirmed and reported by medical officers in the system.

These figures do not represent the totality of HIV infection in the prison system. Testing for HIV infection, as in the community, is carried out only with the consent of the prisoner.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Students

Mr. Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to make students living on student grants and loans eligible to receive a full council tax and rent rebate on the same basis as people on income support. [27939]

Mr. Roger Evans: In general it is the educational maintenance system which is designed to provide support for students, not the social security system, and we have no plans to change this. However, council tax benefit and housing benefit are available to students in specified vulnerable groups such as students with dependant children and those who are disabled.

Income Support

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security, pursuant to his answer of 5 April, *Official Report*, column *1224*, in respect of evidence of estrangement in the payment of income support to 16 and 17-year-olds, what changes his Department has requested in the practices operated by Benefits Agency officers; and what liaison he has had with the Department of Health in this respect. [28328]

Mr. Roger Evans: Expanded guidance on dealing with claims under the severe hardship provision is expected to be issued to Benefits Agency offices shortly. The purpose of the guidance is to ensure consistency across the country in respect of the proper verification of claims. The guidance is being developed in consultation with the Department of Health.

Mr. Bradley: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what plans he has to reintroduce a mortgage benefit to assist low-income owner occupiers who are not eligible for social security help with mortgage interest payments. [28302]

Mr. Roger Evans: There has never been a mortgage benefit for low-income owner occupiers and we have no plans to introduce one.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security if he will list all areas within *(a)* his Department, *(b)* agencies under his Department's control and *(c)* organisations for which he has ministerial responsibility to which Crown immunity applies; what consideration he has given to removing this; and if he will make a statement. [28651]

Mr. Hague: Crown Immunity applies to the Department of Social Security and all its next steps agencies in all instances where the Crown is not included in a particular piece of legislation. Examples of this occur in the Employment Protection Consolidation Act 1978 in respect of redundancy and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 in respect of prosecution. Where the Crown is not so included it always endeavours to follow the legislation. The Crown is included in much legislation—for example the Data Protection Act 1984—and much employment legislation. The Department also has duties by virtue of social security legislation. Whenever a new piece of legislation is drafted, the question of whether the Crown should be included is always considered.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what assessment he has made of the implications of the proposed revisions to housing benefit entitlement to those with special needs; and if he will make a statement. [28895]

Mr. Roger Evans: I refer the hon. Member to the reply that I gave to the hon. member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field) on 12 June, *Official Report*, column *420*.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Corbyn: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what is his Department's latest calculation of the proportion of GDP that will be spent on his Department in 1998, 2000 and 2005, assuming no change in DSS eligibility. [27041]

Mr. Hague: The proportion of GDP that will be spent by the Department of Social Security is forecast to be:

1997–98: 11.7 per cent.

2000–2001: 11.5 per cent.

The information is not available for 2005.

(i) These figures assume constant unemployment and Departmental administrative costs and are in 1994–95 prices.

(ii) *Source:* Financial Statement and Budget Red Book
The 1995 Social Security Departmental Report
The Growth of Social Security

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what legal advice he has sought from solicitors or barristers in respect of draft conclusions reached by the Scott inquiry; what is the estimated cost of such legal expenses to public funds; and if he will make a statement. [28898]

Mr. Lilley: The Government do not consider it right to publish the nature or costs of any advice which may have been given to individual witnesses to the Scott inquiry. This is a matter of confidence between them and any legal advisers they may have retained.

Self-employment

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Social Security what guidelines, excluding case law, are used by the Contributions Agency to determine whether a person is employed or self-employed. [28339]

Mr. Arbuthnot: Liability to pay a particular class of national insurance contribution is determined by reference to the law on national insurance, which generally distinguishes between employees and self-employed persons by reference to contract of service. However, the law does not define contract of service. The Contributions Agency has no legal power to determine employment status, but will investigate, consider and advise individuals and business as necessary. When doing so the agency relies on tests which have emerged from the case law of the courts over many years and applies these to the facts of the individual case concerned. These are the only guidelines which the agency uses formally to advise whether someone is employed or self-employed.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Non-human Primates

Mr. Hinchliffe: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the maximum number of non-human primates which may be quarantined within a facility; and what is the ratio of trained staff to primates at any given location and time who are capable of dealing with a filovirus outbreak. [26670]

Mrs. Browning: The maximum number of non-human primates which may be quarantined within a facility depends on the size of the facility. Each facility has a superintending veterinary surgeon or doctor who is required to inspect the animals at least once a week and to report any deaths in quarantine to the Ministry. Guidance on how to handle non-human primates safely has been prepared by the Medical Research Council and has been issued to all quarantine facilities authorised to keep non-human primates. I have placed a copy of the guidance, which is entitled "The Management of Simians in Relation to Infectious Hazards to Staff", in the Library.

Fishing Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has on catches in each International Council for the Exploration of the Seas sub-region by each EU member's fishing fleet for each of the last five years. [27218]

Mr. Jack: Information on the uptake of quota by each member state, by stock, is provided monthly by the Commission to member states. This information is broken down by total allowable catch for each stock, whether it be by ICES sub-area or group of sub-areas. Copies of recent end year figures, as compiled by the Commission, are being placed in the Library.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food on what catch records were decided when catch shares were allocated in the ICES sub-regions; if the United Kingdom submitted catch estimates for each EU nation; if each nation submitted its own estimates; and how differences in estimates were reconciled. [27217]

Mr. Jack: The allocation keys for member states were established by reference to the catch records for the years 1973 to 1978. Each member state was responsible for its own catch records. The keys were finally established in 1983 after six years of negotiation.

Food Safety

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) what money is available to each local authority to cover the expense of implementing EC directive 93/99; and from which fund it is provided; [28374]

(2) what is the average cost of retraining an unqualified trading standards officer to the level required by EC directive 93/99; [28376]

(3) what is the estimated total of *(a)* retraining costs and *(b)* redundancy costs for environmental health officers and trading standards officers affected by EC directive 93/99; [28372]

(4) how much money was *(a)* available to and *(b)* used by each local authority from the revenue support grant specifically aimed at food safety in each of the last five years; [28375]

(5) what is the average cost of retraining an unqualified environmental health officer to the level required by EC directive 93/95; [28377]

(6) what is the estimated number of environmental health officers and trading standards who will be affected by EC directive 93/99. [28373]

Mrs. Browning: Following the passage of the Food Safety Act 1990, £30 million which was indexed-linked, was added to the revenue support grant on a continuing basis to cover the extra costs arising to local authorities in discharging their responsibilities under the Act. The duties arising from the implementation of EC directive 93/99 are part of those responsibilities. The sum is not

ring-fenced and it is therefore for each local authority to decide upon the exact allocation of its share of the sum towards food law enforcement activities. Directive 93/99 does not impose any new training requirements for trading standards officers and environmental health officers engaged on food work. The level of training required for their assistants who are also authorised officers under the Food Safety Act, and the associated costs, will be determined by their individual employing local authority. It is not envisaged that there will be any redundancies in either profession. The exact numbers of officers in each profession involved in food control are not held centrally.

Sheep Dip

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the research funded by his Department in developing alternatives to organophosphorus sheep dip in each of the last 10 years. [28300]

Mrs. Browning: The information requested is as follows:

1985–86 to 1991–92

Nil

1992–93 to 1994–95

Immunological approach to the control of sheep scab. Pesticide reduction by developing tests to monitor resistance in sheep scab mites and other ectoparasites.

1995–96

Immunological approach to the control of sheep scab. Non-chemical methods for the control of ectoparasites.

Genetically Engineered Crops

Mr. Morley: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what studies are available to him of the environmental impact of genetically engineered crops designed to be resistant to herbicides; and what evidence there is of potential prejudice to the environment arising from their use. [28453]

Mrs. Browning: Under the Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 1992, the release or marketing of genetically modified organisms, including GM crops resistant to herbicides, is subject to prior consent. Applications for consent are required to be accompanied by a risk assessment. Scientific advice is given on applications by an independent committee of experts "The Advisory Committee on Releases into the Environment".

Information is also available from research programmes on the release of GM crops carried out by a number of Departments.

Available scientific information, experience to date and independent expert advice have not raised concern in terms of adverse effects on the environment from the release of GM crop plants resistant to herbicides. We will continue to rely on such information and the advice of ACRE in the review of applications to release GM organisms, including herbicide resistant crops, in order to assess their environmental impact.

Scott Inquiry

Mr. Bermingham: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what legal advice he has sought from solicitors or barristers in respect of draft conclusions reached by the Scott inquiry; what is the estimated cost of such legal expenses to public funds; and if he will make a statement. [28899]

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government do not consider it right to publish the nature or costs of any advice which may have been given to individual witnesses to the Scott inquiry. This is a matter of confidence between them and any legal advisers they may have retained.

Mr. Winnick: To ask the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what communications he received from Lord Justice Scott over the evidence he gave to the inquiry into arms for Iraq; and what were the dates and the dates of his replies. [28866]

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to the hon. Members for Wallsend (Mr. Byers) and for Thurrock (Mr. Mackinlay) on 12 June, *Official Report*, column *373*.

EMPLOYMENT

Job Creation Schemes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) how many people attended and left the enterprise allowance scheme in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27455]

(2) if he will list the numbers leaving the youth training programme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27516]

(3) if he will list the numbers leaving the community enterprise programme and community programme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of that operation, including those who left before completion of the schemes; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27524]

(4) how many people attended and left the training opportunity scheme, in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27445]

(5) how many people attended and left the job training programme, in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27447]

(6) how many people attended and left the training for work scheme, in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27449]

(7) how many people attended and left the youth training scheme, in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27451]

(8) how many people attended and left the business start-up scheme in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27457]

(9) if he will list the numbers leaving the youth opportunities programme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further reemployment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27514]

(10) if he will list the numbers leaving the business enterprise support scheme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27530]

(11) if he will list the numbers leaving the employment training scheme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27526]

(12) how many people attended and left the business enterprise support scheme in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27456]

(13) if he will list the numbers leaving the training for work scheme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27513]

(14) if he will list the numbers leaving the enterprise allowance scheme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27529]

(15) how many people attended and left the youth training scheme in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27452]

(16) if he will list the numbers leaving the job training programme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he willlist the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27525]

(17) how many people attended and left the community enterprise programme and community programme in each year of their operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27446]

(18) how many people attended and left the employment training scheme in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27448]

(19) how many people attended and left the youth opportunities programme, in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme; [27450]

(20) if he will list the numbers leaving the youth training scheme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27515]

(21) if he will list the numbers leaving the training opportunity scheme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went into work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27523]

(22) if he will list the numbers leaving the business start-up scheme, as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers, for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went to work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all. [27505]

Mr. Paice: As the information is contained in a large number of tables, I will write to the hon. Member and place a copy of my reply in the Library.

Employment Subsidy Schemes

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the numbers leaving the temporary employment subsidy scheme as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers, for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went to work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification

each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27506]

(2) if he will list the numbers leaving the temporary short-time working compensation scheme, as an actual number and as a percentage of total leavers, for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went to work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27508]

(3) if he will list the numbers attending and leaving the temporary short-time working compensation scheme, for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; [27518]

(4) how many people attended and left the temporary employment subsidy scheme in each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme. [27458]

Mr. Paice: The temporary employment subsidy scheme and the temporary short-time working compensation scheme provided subsidies to firms with the objective of preventing redundancies. It was not paid in respect of individual workers, so it is difficult to identify people directly supported by the programme. Given the objective of the scheme, there was no evaluation carried out of particular individuals who were subsidised, and there is no information available on what happened when the subsidy ended. I will write to the hon. Member to give further information on the programme.

Job Release Scheme

Mr. Frank Field: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment (1) if he will list the numbers leaving the job release scheme, as an actual number and a s a percentage of total leavers, for each year of its operation, including those who left before completion of the scheme; if he will indicate those who went to work, those who went into further employment schemes and those who became unemployed; and, of these, if he will list the type and level of qualification each leaver obtained, including those who failed to obtain any qualification at all; [27507]

(2) if he will list the numbers attending and leaving the job release scheme, for each year of its operation, including those who left before the completion of the scheme. [27517]

Mr. Paice: The aim of the job release scheme was to reduce the labour supply by subsidising the early withdrawal from the labour force of people who were approaching state pension age. As the objective was early retirement, no consideration was given to what happened to people after their allowance ended. I will write to the hon. Member to give further information on the programme.

Sixteen and Seventeen-year-olds

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many persons aged 16 and 17 years were *(a)* not in full-time education training or employment in each quarter since January 1988, *(b)* in full-time employment in each quarter since January 1988 and *(c)* in full-time training in each quarter since January 1988. [28120]

Mr. Paice: The information is contained in the following table. Figures are not available on a quarterly basis before spring 1992. Annual figures are available from spring 1988 to spring 1991, but they are not on the same basis as those from spring 1992 onwards.

16 and 17 year olds in Great Britain—1988–94[1]

Not seasonally adjusted, thousands.

	(a) Not in employment, training or full-time education[2]	*(b) In full-time employment excluding government employment and training programmes*[3]	*(c) Government employment and training programmes*[4]
Spring 1992	116	141	129
Summer 1992	173	161	125
Autumn 1992	127	148	135
Winter 1992–93	103	132	123
Spring 1993	102	108	118
Summer 1993	156	132	111
Autumn 1993	129	122	127
Winter 1993–94	106	120	128
Spring 1994	103	111	106
Summer 1994	137	138	95
Autumn 1994	106	132	102

Source: The Labour Force Survey.

[1] All estimates relate to young people aged 16 and 17 at the time of the survey.

[2] The figures comprise all those aged 16 and 17 who were not in full-time employment, not on a government employment or training programme, mainly youth training and who were not full-time students.

[3] Includes unpaid family workers.

[4] The labour force survey is known to undercount those on Government employment and training programmes.

Training Expenditure

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the total expenditure on *(a)* employment training and *(b)* youth training in the year 1994–95 within the Yorkshire and Humberside area; and how many (i) males and (ii) females were on such schemes. [28256]

Mr. Paice: The latest figures available show that the total expenditure in Yorkshire and Humberside for 1994–95 for *(a)* training for work was £40,262,235 and for *(b)* youth training youth credits was £70,599,174.

Employment training was replaced by training for work in April 1993.

The latest figures available for 1994–95 show that the number of (i) males who participated in training for work was 24,925 and in youth training youth credits was 16,649; the number of (ii) females who participated in training for work was 9,516 and in youth training youth credits was 13,096.

Labour Statistics

Mr. French: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will publish each month a set of employment figures analysed in the same way as the monthly unemployment figures. [28338]

Mr. Oppenheim: I have no plans to extend the range of information about employment which is currently published monthly.

Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what was the administration cost of the Barnsley and Doncaster TEC for the year 1994–95; and what the figures were in previous years. [28272]

Mr. Paice: The administration costs of the Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council in 1994–95 will be stated in the TEC's annual accounts, which will be published shortly. Its administration costs were £1,903,000 in 1993–94 and £1,820,000 in 1992–93.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when he expects to award the Barnsley/Doncaster TEC a three-year licence; and if he will make a statement. [28257]

Mr. Paice: As I informed the House and the hon. Member by letter on 29 November 1994, *Official Report*, column *639*, the Barnsley and Doncaster training and Enterprise Council was one of the first 12 TECs to complete the process of meeting the rigorous standards set for the award of a three-year licence. The TEC's licence is effective from April 1995.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment how many successful placements the Barnsley and Doncaster TEC achieved for the year 1994–95; if he will give the number by trade; and what the figures were for previous years. [28273]

Mr. Paice: Information is not available on the number of short-term work placements trainees undertake as part of training. However, the training and enterprise council's information on the number of job outcomes from both youth and adult training shows: 3,734 job outcomes in 1994–95; 2,855 in 1993–94 and 2,937 in 1992–93. This information is not collected by trade.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what has been the percentage change in the proportion of women as *(a)* chairs, *(b)* chief executives and *(c)* board members since the inception of the Barnsley and Doncaster TEC; and if he will make a statement. [28259]

Mr. Paice: The Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council board has had one female director throughout its existence, apart from the period February to August 1992. TECs are private limited companies and are free to appoint directors, including chairmen, as long as they meet the criteria set out in the agreement between the TEC and the Employment Department.

Mr. Redmond: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list the names he holds of potential *(a)* chairmen and *(b)* chief executives for Barnsley and Doncaster TEC. [28263]

Mr. Paice: The appointment of a chairman or chief executive for the Barnsley and Doncaster training and enterprise council would be a matter for the TEC board, and the Department does not hold names of potential candidates.

International Labour Organisation

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment when the United Kingdom's affiliation fee to the International Labour Organisation is normally paid; and when he expects it to be paid in the current year. [28580]

Miss Widdecombe: The United Kingdom's subscription to the International Labour Organisation is normally paid before the end of the calendar year to which it applies. The current year's subscription should normally therefore be paid by December 1995.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the cost to public funds of the Confederation of British Industry delegation attendance at the International Labour Organisation annual meeting in the current year. [28581]

Miss Widdecombe: The cost to public funds is estimated to be £18,000.

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment what will be the cost to public funds of the Government delegation's attendance at the International Labour Organisation annual meeting in the current year. [28582]

Miss Widdecombe: The cost of sending the Government delegation to the International Labour conference this year is estimated to be £22,000.

Jobseeker's Allowance

Mr. Chidgey: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if the 16 hours per week that students on benefit are allowed to study while being supervised by a tutor under the jobseeker's allowance can be averaged out over a number of weeks. [28160]

Miss Widdecombe: People claiming jobseeker's allowance will be able to undertake part-time courses provided they remain available for, and actively seeking, employment. In the case of courses funded by the Further Education Funding Council, the threshold will be 16 guided learning hours per week. This is designed to allow the same number of people to study while claiming benefit as do so now.

A number of detailed issues are still being considered. One of these is the question of whether the number of guided learning hours will be averaged out over a period. Our proposals will be laid before the House in regulations.

Training and Enterprise Councils

Mr. Milburn: To ask the Secretary of State for Employment if he will list *(a)* the profits or losses incurred and *(b)* the reserves of each training and enterprise council in each of the last three years. [28859]

Mr. Paice: The following tables list *(a)* the profits or losses incurred and *(b)* the accumulated reserves of each English training and enterprise council at the end of the financial years 1991–92, 1992–93 and 1993–94.

The figures are those shown in the audited statutory accounts lodged at Companies House.

The turnover of individual TECs varies considerably therefore comparison between TECs is not possible.

Post tax operating surplus

£000

TECs by region	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Northern			
County Durham	2,818,075	2,595,107	1,263,515
Northumberland	1,262,703	1,233,752	1,453,797
Teesside	3,838,000	3,388,000	1,554,000

Post tax operating surplus

£000

TECs by region	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94
Tyneside	2,818,000	(883,000)	(989,000)
Sunderland (Wearside)	293,924	512,381	370,585
Merseyside			
CEWTEC	1,974,732	603,311	(411,813)
Merseyside	3,012,181	1,191,532	428,632
QUALITEC	741,670	312,509	201,263
North West			
Bolton/Bury	1,720,642	847,848	1,772,780
Manchester	2,936,887	(880,942)	1,433,075
METRO	188,000	108,000	(141,000)
Oldham	570,321	83,406	(259,844)
Rochdale	399,262	597,651	578,626
South and East Cheshire	1,124,823	420,244	(197,045)
Stockport and High Peak	1,833,580	655,247	45,430
Cumbria	1,187,739	110,772	(198,587)
ELTEC	370,271	1,338,587	238,653
LAWTEC	3,150,027	(236,657)	1,180,674
NORMID	1,511,822	(418,902)	777,119
Yorks and Humber			
Barnsley/Doncaster	2,688,055	1,012,208	(821,000)
Bradford	1,773,485	1,524,888	(297,068)
Calderdale and Kirklees	465,421	(1,574)	834,291
Humberside	2,952,198	2,258,408	(143,476)
Leeds	2,352,648	2,160,436	112,973
North Yorks	2,104,000	936,000	917,000
Rotherham	1,485,797	1,134,336	602,442
Sheffield	2,340,235	883,000	1,144,000
Wakefield	2,118,035	668,301	746,481
Eastern			
Bedfordshire	1,335,932	220,801	(456,586)
CAMBS	560,998	34,280	341,593
Essex	3,037,484	742,805	(794,405)
Greater Peterborough	754,539	661,071	(70,137)
Hertfordshire	863,034	1,199,133	(242,716)
Norfolk and Waverney	1,279,837	(411,789)	789,939
Suffolk	1,234,110	473,259	(1,455,366)
East Midlands			
Greater Nottingham	844,000	98,000	314,000
Leicester	2,709,000	1,888,317	895,230
Lincolnshire	1,225,370	1,328,872	1,225,284
Northamptonshire	1,867,401	109,609	(736,276)
North Derbyshire	653,113	87,828	259,345
North Nottinghamshire	1,494,000	(376,000)	839,556
South Derbyshire	3,510,586	611,343	(431,000)
West Midlands			
Birmingham	2,217,000	(1,606,000)	(281,000)
Central England	992,591	347,027	(80,710)
Coventry/Warwick	9,899	7,122	(463,109)
Dudley	411,480	801,744	65,377
HAWTEC	978,862	702,859	(653,609)
Sandwell	917,391	788,829	(67,510)
Shropshire	598,942	703,807	321,804
Staffordshire	1,399,654	1,717,636	1,297,000
Walsall	988,580	941,491	(1,036,329)
Wolverhampton	1,032,122	379,147	(512,000)
South West			
Avon	1,925,855	1,647,961	1,303,000
Devon/Cornwall	3,187,000	121,000	(1,956,000)
Dorset	1,171,204	53,973	(276,063)
Gloucester	1,574,830	666	294,534
Somerset	388,152	711,143	446,747
Wiltshire	849,313	251,265	1,044,849
London			
AZTEC	1,289,656	411,486	832,308
CENTEC	148,575	757,876	1,530,114
CILNTEC	550,812	1,610,046	227,611
LETEC	(483,267)	1,138,517	2,604,868
North London	1,153,445	1,851,198	(259,730)
North West London	438,984	424,679	548,329
SOLOTEC	896,400	2,530,966	1,631,150
South Thames	1,292,463	2,318,842	(1,292,021)
West London	162,104	1,000,929	348,466

Post tax operating surplus

£000

TECs by region	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94
South East			
Hampshire	1,884,488	1,430,483	(185,061)
Isle of Wight	479,142	161,087	134,138
Kent	3,542,667	2,231,284	(836,301)
Milton Keynes/North Bucks	360,889	99,326	218,407
Heart of England	962,649	860,611	72,551
Surrey	693,092	967,259	1,164,642
Sussex	3,253,000	1,875,000	14,000
Thames Valley Ent.	2,719,118	643,002	1,175,025
Grand total	109,389,029	56,704,639	20,050,441

Accumulated reserves

£000

TECs by region	1991–92	1992–93	1993–94
Northern			
County Durham	3,987	6,582	7,845
Northumberland	2,463	3,696	5,150
Teesside	5,796	9,186	10,738
Tyneside	5,369	4,486	3,497
Sunderland City (Wearside)	2,002	2,514	2,885
Merseyside			
CEWTEC	1,976	2,579	2,167
Merseyside	3,018	4,210	4,638
QUALITEC	743	1,055	1,257
North West			
Bolton/Bury	2,013	2,861	4,633
Manchester	4,258	3,377	4,810
METRO	411	519	378
Oldham	1,373	1,456	1,196
Rochdale	489	1,087	1,665
South and East Cheshire	1,999	2,419	2,222
Stockport and High Peak	2,126	2,782	2,827
Cumbria	2,888	2,999	2,800
ELTEC	2,122	3,364	3,602
LAWTEC	3,154	2,917	4,098
NORMID	1,512	1,093	1,870
Yorks and Humber			
Barnsley/Doncaster	2,981	3,993	3,172
Bradford	1,907	3,432	3,135
Calderdale and Kirklees	830	828	1,662
Humberside	2,934	5,193	5,049
Leeds	3,564	5,724	5,837
North Yorks	3,417	4,353	5,270
Rotherham	1,731	2,865	3,467
Sheffield	3,274	4,157	5,301
Wakefield	2,441	3,110	3,856
Eastern			
Bedfordshire	1,335	1,556	1,099
CAMBS	588	622	964
Essex	4,294	5,037	4,243
Greater Peterborough	871	1,532	1,462
Hertfordshire	1,442	2,641	2,398
Norfolk and Waverney	2,573	2,161	2,951
Suffolk	2,511	2,984	1,529
East Midlands			
Greater Nottingham	846	944	1,258
Leicester	2,709	4,597	5,492
Lincolnshire	1,225	2,553	3,779
Northamptonshire	1,867	1,977	1,355
North Derbyshire	661	749	1,008
North Nottinghamshire	1,644	1,289	2,129
South Derbyshire	3,494	4,106	3,675
West Midlands			
Birmingham	2,818	1,212	931
Central England	993	1,340	1,259
Coventry/Warwick	2,195	2,203	1,739
Dudley	412	1,214	1,279
HAWTEC	976	1,679	1,025
Sandwell	917	1,706	1,639
Shropshire	600	1,304	1,625

Accumulated reserves

£000

TECs by region	*1991–92*	*1992–93*	*1993–94*
Staffordshire	4,071	5,789	7,086
Walsall	1,398	2,340	1,303
Wolverhampton	1,032	1,411	899
South West			
WESTEC Avon	1,926	3,071	4,374
Devon/Cornwall	7,286	7,407	5,451
Dorset	2,794	2,848	2,572
Gloucester	1,575	1,575	1,870
Somerset	1,035	1,746	2,193
Wiltshire	862	1,110	2,155
London			
AZTEC	1,521	1,932	2,765
CENTEC	149	906	2,437
CILNTEC	551	2,161	2,388
LETEC	(483)	655	3,260
North London	1,153	3,005	2,745
North West London	439	864	1,412
SOLOTEC	908	3,439	5,070
South Thames	1,292	3,611	2,319
West London	162	1,163	1,511
South East			
Hampshire	3,248	4,679	4,493
Isle of Wight	718	879	1,014
Kent	3,543	5,774	4,938
Milton Keynes/North Bucks	578	677	896
Heart of England	1,563	2,424	2,496
Surrey	696	1,663	2,828
Sussex	3,281	5,230	5,244
Thames Valley Ent.	3,327	3,970	5,145
Grand total	150,374	206,572	226,730

WALES

Welsh Language

Mr. Martyn Jones: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of the Welsh population speaks Welsh. [28442]

Mr. Richards: Some 21.5 per cent. spoke Welsh in 1992 according to the 1992 Welsh social survey. Further information is available in "1992 Welsh Social Survey: Report on the Welsh Language", a copy of which is in the Library of the House.

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when he will lay before Parliament guidelines for the preparation of language schemes under the Welsh Language Act 1993, and if he will make a statement. [28475]

Mr. Richards: My right hon. Friend has approved the draft guidelines prepared by the Welsh Language Board without amendment and they were laid before Parliament on Friday 9 June.

Parliamentary Questions

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how many written parliamentary questions were tabled for answer by his Department in each of the past five years; how many of these were not answered because the information *(a)* could be obtained only at disproportionate cost, *(b)* was not held centrally or *(c)* was not normally disclosed; how many of these could now be answered now due to computerisation, more effective and efficient operational systems or more open government; and if he will list each question along with the name and constituency of the right hon. or hon. Member who originally tabled it. [28505]

Mr. Redwood: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of parliamentary questions, which would have been answered directly by him or his Ministers prior to the establishment of executive agencies, are now referred to the chief executive of such an agency. [28485]

Mr. Redwood: Ministers are accountable to Parliament for the policy of their agencies and accounting officer for financial regularity. Written parliamentary questions concerning matters which have been delegated to the chief executive of an executive agency in its framework document, normally receive a reply from the Minister to the effect that he or she has asked the chief executive to reply direct to the Member by letter. The chief executive's letter is published in *Hansard* after the Minister's reply.

Special Areas of Conservation

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the amount of public funds spent in promoting the designation and protection of special areas of consultation in coastal and intertidal areas for the last three years in constant prices; what is his estimate for such spending during the next three financial years; if funding for special areas of consultation within coastal and intertidal areas will permit the United Kingdom to adhere to the European habitats and species directive; and if he will make a statement. [28211]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Marine and intertidal special areas of conservation have not been separately funded. For the purpose of disseminating information relating to these areas, the Countryside Council for Wales had convened meetings of relevant authorities and interested parties and has issued a separate information booklet about marine areas during the recent consultation exercise.

The funding is sufficient to enable the UK to adhere to the European habitats directive.

Tir Cymen

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what public funds are spent on the Tir Cymen for each available year since its inception; and what is the planned spending for the next three available years, giving the figures in constant prices. [28212]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The spending on Tir Cymen since its inception in 1992 is as follows:

1992–93: £600,000
1993–94: £2,100,000
1994–95: £3,400,000
1995–96: £4,000,000 (estimated)

It is not possible at this stage to estiamte levels of expenditure on the scheme after the current financial year.

Mr. Cynog Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment he has made of the results of the Tir Cymen scheme; if all farmers in Wales will be eligible to take part in the Tir Cymen scheme once responsibility is transferred from the Countryside Council for Wales to the Welsh Office; and if he will make a statement. [28213]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: The pilot phase was launched in July 1992 and is planned to run for five years. A decision on the future of the scheme will follow a thorough evaluation exercise later in its term.

Conservation Sites

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will indicate what person or body will be given the responsibility for identifying and overseeing the conservation of sites of international importance following implementation of reorganisation plans for the Countryside Council for Wales. [28214]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: This function will continue to be the responsibility of the Countryside Council for Wales, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales recently made available an additional £100,000 for this purpose.

Wet Grassland

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list the area of wet grasslands in Wales for the latest available five years; what estimates he has made of the area of wet grassland for the next five years; what plans he has to encourage farmers to *(a)* conserve existing wet grassland and *(b)* recreate former grasslands; and if he will make a statement. [28215]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: Annual statistics are not available, but figures can be derived from the Welsh phase 1 habitat survey and from a vegetation survey of the Welsh uplands carried out in the 1980s. Marshy grassland is generally widely distributed throughout lowland and upland Wales where soil moisture levels permits the development of juncus and molina pastures. There are approximately 24,000 hectares of this habitat present in lowland Wales, with a further 40,000 hectares in the uplands. Farmers are encouraged to conserve and recreate wet grassland through entry into an environmentally sensitive area, Tir Cymen or habitat scheme.

First impression of the numbers of farmers applying to join the habitat scheme indicate that large areas of wet grassland habitat will be both maintained and enhanced in future.

Agricultural Land

Mr. Dafis: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made in *(a)* hectares and *(b)* acres of the amount of rural land lost to agriculture or conservation since 1965 at five-yearly intervals, indicating this as a percentage of (i) the area of land used for agriculture and (ii) the total land surface of Wales. [28216]

Mr. Gwilym Jones: No estimates of the amount of rural land lost to agriculture or conservation are available centrally. Estimates of the change in the total amount of land used for agriculture are shown in the following table:

Net change in agricultural land

	Net change in		*Net change as a percentage of*	
	(a) hectares	*(b) acres*	*(i) land used for agriculture*	*(ii) the total area of Wales*
1965–70	–35,425	–87,534	–2.1	–1.7
1970–75	–11,100	–27,430	–0.7	–0.5
1975–80	17,130	42,329	1.0	0.8
1980–85	1,323	3,269	0.1	0.1
1985–90	–658	–1,626	–0.0	–0.0
1990–94[1]	–4,206	–10,393	–0.2	–0.2

[1] Figures for 1995 are not yet available.

Countryside Council for Wales

Mr. Alex Carlile: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations have been made to him by the board of the Countryside Council for Wales requesting additional moneys to ensure it meets its statutory obligations; and if he will make a statement. [28476]

Mr. Redwood: I am satisfied, as is the Countryside Council for Wales, that it has sufficient funds to fulfil its statutory duties. Written requests for additional funding were made on 27 February and 9 March. These requests were discussed fully in a meeting I held on 24 May with the chairman and chief executive of the Countryside Council for Wales. At the meeting, I asked the council to further reduce its overheads and to come forward with imaginative schemes using new technology to encourage home working. I have said that £325,000 of capital is available for a suitable scheme. In addition, I have also made available an extra £200,000 for new work to be undertaken on the EC habitats directive and on a study into the effects of overgrazing in Wales. The council has agreed to reduce its overheads by £1.96 million this year.

Welsh Assembly

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what assessment his Department has made about the likely costs of a Welsh Assembly; on what assumptions such work has been based; and if he will place a copy of all studies in the Library. [28892]

Mr. Redwood: My Department did not work out the costs of the proposals for a Welsh Assembly—I did. The Welsh Office has told me what the costs of employing people at the Welsh Office are.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what work the Welsh Office has undertaken on a Welsh Assembly since 1979; and if he will place a copy of all studies in the Library. [28891]

Mr. Redwood: No studies or other substantive work on the possibility of a Welsh Assembly have been carried out by the Welsh Office since 1979.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will place a copy of his calculation of the cost of a Welsh Assembly in the Library. [28893]

Mr. Redwood: I refer the hon. Gentlemen to the information I put out in my press notice last Friday, 9 June 1995.

Mr. Ron Davies: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what independent advice his Department has sought on the costs of a Welsh Assembly. [28890]

Mr. Redwood: My Department has taken no independent advice on the costs of the current proposals for a Welsh Assembly.

EstateCare Group

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales when the proposed feasibility study for the privatisation of the EstateCare Group of the Welsh Health Common Services Authority was submitted to him; and if he will make a statement. [28635]

Mr. Redwood: The report by Touche Ross was submitted to my Department on 1 June 1995.

NHS Performance Tables

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the cost of *(a)* the publication and *(b)* the official launching of the NHS performance tables on 4 July. [28636]

Mr. Redwood: The estimated expenditure on publishing and launching the 1995 NHS performance tables is £23,000.

Welsh Development Agency

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales, pursuant to his answer of 8 June, *Official Report*, columns *289–90*, what representations he has had from the Member of the European Commission responsible for regional development concerning the use of *(a)* grant-in-aid and *(b)* the regional development fund in resourcing the Welsh Development Agency; if he will place a copy of the correspondence between the Commission, the Welsh Development Agency and himself on this issue in the Library; and if he will make a statement. [28664]

Mr. Redwood: The chairman of the Welsh Development Agency has received a letter from an official of the European Commission asking a number of questions about the agency's participation in European development programmes. The Commission has been informed that my Department will be replying to these inquiries in due course. Subject to the agreement of the Commission, I shall arrange for a copy of its letter to be placed in the Library of the House.

Crown Immunity

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all areas within *(a)* his Department, *(b)* agencies under his Department's control and *(c)* organisations for which he has ministerial responsibility to which Crown immunity applies; what consideration he has given to removing this; and if he will make a statement. [28647]

Mr. Redwood: An Act of Parliament is presumed not to bind the Crown unless the contrary intention is clearly stated, or there is a necessary implication that the Crown is to be bound. Ministers and civil servants will not necessarily share the Crown's immunity from criminal prosecution.

The Government policy on Crown immunity, as set out in Cm 1599, "The Citizen's Charter—Raising the Standard", is that Crown immunity is being progressively reduced as legislative opportunities arise. In the meantime, Crown bodies are expected to behave as though they were bound by regulations.

Prescription Pricing

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what was the corporate structure and legal basis proposed under the bid by the Prescription Pricing Authority (England) to supply the prescription pricing service in Wales via the current market testing exercise. [28856]

Mr. Redwood: The Welsh Health Common Services Authority has invited the Prescription Pricing Authority and four other organisations to submit bids to supply prescription pricing and checking services in Wales. Bids are expected later this month. It is for the PPA to satisfy WHCSA that it has the legal basis to take on this work and I understand that WHCSA has asked the PPA to confirm this.

Psychiatric Services

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales on what date each of the health authorities and trusts responsible for community services last supplied information to him pertaining to the regular medical audit of psychiatric services. [28659]

Mr. Redwood: My Department does not monitor audit activity to this level of detail. Medical audit is a professionally led activity, and is an issue for NHS trusts and local purchasers.

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales how frequently he requires the psychiatric services of each community health care trust and health authority in Wales to be submitted to medical audit; and how frequently he requires each trust and authority to apply comprehensive information to his Department for that purpose. [28660]

Mr. Redwood: Hospital doctors are required to regularly review and audit their activities. In addition, health authorities and NHS trusts can agree on programmes of audit and reflect that agreement in their contracts. NHS trusts are not required to submit information of this kind to the Department, although the Department does support projects that promote effective audit.

University Hospital of Wales—A48 Link Road

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what arrangements he has made for meeting councillors and officers of South Glamorgan and Cardiff city council to discuss the funding arrangements for the Eastern avenue flyover access directly into the University hospital of Wales site, Heath, Cardiff. [28661]

Mr. Redwood: My officials are continuing discussions with the relevant parties.

EC Urban Initiative

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has had concerning the number of applications he will be forwarding from Wales to the European Commission under the urban initiative; when he expects a further round of urban initiative applications; and if he will make a statement. [28638]

Mr. Redwood: None. At present, I have no plans to invite additional applications for the urban initiative. The European Commission requested one bid for Wales and I have selected Swansea city council's application for Townhill. Negotiations have commenced and approval is currently scheduled for July.

SCOTLAND

Antanas Gecas

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what factors led the Lord Advocate not to pursue the prosecution of Antanas Gecas. [25621]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: It is not the normal practice of my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate to disclose the names of individuals who may have been under investigation. Allegations that persons living in Scotland were responsible for war crimes committed during the second world war were investigated by a specialised Crown Office unit formed in 1991. The results of those investigations were reported to Crown counsel, who decided in 1994 that there was not at that time sufficient available evidence for a criminal prosecution in any of the cases reported to it. That remains the position.

GP Fundholders

Mr. Morgan: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what external legal advice has been *(a)* sought and *(b)* received in respect of parliamentary approval for the payment of practice management expenses by GP fundholders. [27016]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton *[holding answer 6 June 1995]:* No such advice was sought or received.

A76

Mr. Foulkes: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the volume of traffic on each identifiable stretch of the A76 for comparable periods during the past five years. [27377]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The information is set out in the following table. It has been supplied from records extracted from various automatic traffic counters located on the route in question. Due to the nature of the counting "regimes" of Dumfries and Galloway regional council and of Strathclyde regional council, which manage the counters on behalf of the Scottish Office, there is little continuous counting. The table therefore does not contain data for all stretches for all years and reflects some seasonal variation. However, examination of some of the more permanent sites suggest that the variation is not significant. The Scottish Office published in October of last year a pamphlet on the on-going A76 route action plan.

Annual average daily flows

"Route" and Counter location	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Dumfries-Thornhill					
A76 north of A75	—	17,776	—	18,258	18,929
A76 Newbridge	—	—	—	—	8,011
A76 Monks Lodge	—	—	—	—	5,499
A76 N/W of Auldridge	—	—	—	—	5,632
Thornhill-Carronbridge					
A76 S/E of Carronbridge	—	—	—	—	4,807
Carronbridge-Cumnock					
A76 Mennock	—	—	2,737	3,401	2,111
A76 Reyhill Farm	—	—	—	—	4,017
A76 Gateshead Cottages	—	—	—	—	4,899
A76 Polshill	3,653	—	—	—	—
Cumnock-Kilmarnock					
A76 Little Heateth	7,532	7,005	—	—	—
A76 Cumnock bypass (S of A70)[1]	—	—	—	—	4,701
A76 Cumnock bypass (N of A70)[1]	—	—	—	—	5,371
A76 south of Mauchline[1]	—	—	—	—	8,856
A76 north of Mauchline[1]	—	—	—	—	8,438
A76 Bellfield to A719[1]	—	—	—	—	9,127

[1] Figures based on 12 hour counts (factored up to provide annual average daily flows) carried out in October 1994.

Prisons

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of receptions of young people to prison for 1994 shown by *(a)* sex, *(b)* age, *(c)* offence, *(d)* institution and *(e)* whether remand or sentenced. [27673]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Michael Connarty dated 15 June 1995:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of receptions of young people to prison for 1994 by sex, age, offence, institution and whether remand or sentenced.

Table 1 enclosed with this letter shows remand receptions by sex and by establishment. Information on the types of offences allegedly committed by—or the individual ages of—those received on remand is not collected centrally.

Information on sentenced receptions is shown in the age groups under 16, 16–17 and 18–20 (where appropriate). Tables 2A and 2I set out information in relation to direct receptions from court and Tables 3A to 3L in respect of receptions for final default. As regards Tables 2A and 3A on females, the only all female establishment is Cornton Vale. In addition to the female receptions shown in these tables there were five others: one direct and three fine defaulter receptions to Dumfries and one fine defaulter reception to Inverness. Sentenced receptions are defined as follows. Where a person has several custodial sentences imposed on him by one court in one day this is counted as a reception. However, where custodial sentences are imposed on a person by two or more courts in one day, two receptions are recorded. Also, if a person is reconvicted while serving a custodial sentence and a further custodial sentence is imposed, this is also regarded as a reception.

Remand and sentenced receptions cannot be added together to produce a total receptions figure due to some double-counting. For example, if an individual is first received untried or convicted awaiting sentence and is subsequently awarded a custodial sentence, there will be two receptions relating to this individual's time in prison—appearing both as a remand and sentenced reception.

As the information requested is rather lengthy I have arranged for a copy of the tables to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of prison receptions in each year from 1990 by sex and offence. [27670]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Michael Connarty, dated 15 June 1995:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the number of prison receptions in each year from 1990 by sex and offence.

I attach two tables which provide the information in relation to sentenced receptions, showing direct receptions from court and receptions for fine default separately. Sentenced receptions are defined as follows. Where a person has several custodial sentences imposed on him by one court in one day this is counted as a reception. However, where custodial sentences are imposed on a person by two or more courts in one day, two receptions are recorded. Also, if a person is reconvicted while serving a custodial sentence and a further custodial sentence is imposed, this is also regarded as a reception.

Information on the types of offence allegedly committed by those received on remand is not collected centrally, but remand receptions were as follows:

Remand and sentenced receptions cannot be added together to produce a total receptions figure due to some double-counting. For example, if an individual is first received untried or convicted awaiting sentence and is subsequently awarded a custodial sentence, there will be two receptions relating to this individual's time in prison—appearing both as a remand and sentenced reception.

	1990	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*[1]
Male	14,323	12,360	12,722	12,478	13,985
Female	845	767	824	934	937
Total	15,168	13,127	13,546	13,412	14,922

[1] Information for 1994 is provisional.

Direct receptions to Scottish penal establishments by crime and offence, 1990–1994[1]

Crime/offence	*1990*		*1991*		*1992*		*1993*		*1994*[1]	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Total crimes and offences	9,751	519	9,729	578	11,022	562	11,818	678	11,491	713
Total crimes: sub total	7,038	427	7,099	479	7,880	464	8,511	561	8,131	603
Non-sexual crimes of violence: sub total	1,001	32	933	24	1,134	18	1,361	25	1,241	25
Homicide	66	5	56	1	74	4	76	4	77	5
Serious assault etc.	557	20	560	16	682	6	717	15	612	11
Handling offensive weapons	14	0	17	1	19	0	56	0	126	4
Robbery	340	4	275	4	335	4	489	4	396	3
Other	24	3	25	2	24	4	23	2	30	2
Crimes of indecency: sub total	203	9	176	8	162	8	186	9	210	6
Sexual assault	78	1	67	0	68	0	69	0	64	0
Lewd and libidinous practices	98	0	84	1	75	1	90	0	129	0
Other	27	8	25	7	19	7	27	9	17	6
Crimes of dishonesty: sub total	5,021	351	5,110	406	5,594	402	5,654	476	5,487	498
Housebreaking	1,858	11	1,823	16	1,842	14	1,878	15	1,782	17
Theft by opening lockfast places	262	2	358	1	352	2	409	1	551	1
Theft of a motor vehicle	368	0	435	3	596	0	648	0	594	0
Other theft	1,871	307	1,800	351	2,018	355	2,029	416	1,852	433
Fraud	209	9	192	14	171	7	181	22	163	31
Other	453	22	502	21	615	24	509	22	545	16
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.: sub total	149	9	118	6	149	7	162	6	173	2
Fire-raising	29	2	27	1	31	3	38	2	43	1
Vandalism etc.	120	7	91	5	118	4	124	4	130	1
Other crimes: sub total	664	26	762	35	841	29	1,148	45	1,020	72
Crimes against public justice	356	10	385	20	441	15	643	20	481	33
Drugs offences	297	16	368	14	375	14	493	25	521	38
Other	11	0	9	1	25	0	12	0	18	1
Total offences: sub total	2,713	92	2,630	99	3,142	98	3,307	117	3,360	110

Direct receptions to Scottish penal establishments by crime and offence, 1990–1994[1]

Crime/offence	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994[1]	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Miscellaneous offences: sub total	2,063	88	1,939	99	2,274	96	2,388	114	2,366	108
Petty assault	566	24	560	25	566	36	681	36	749	36
Breach of the peace	1,290	59	1,214	70	1,541	58	1,496	74	1,391	71
Drunkenness	91	2	68	0	88	1	124	0	123	0
Other	116	3	97	4	79	1	87	4	103	1
Motor vehicle offences: sub total	650	4	691	0	868	2	919	3	994	2
Reckless and careless driving	43	2	24	0	59	0	63	0	67	0
Drunk driving	85	1	133	0	145	0	119	0	110	0
Speeding	1	0	2	0	3	0	7	0	5	0
Unlawful use of vehicles	505	0	518	0	650	2	720	3	807	1
Vehicle defect offences	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Other	14	1	13	0	11	0	10	0	4	1

[1] Information for 1994 is provisional.

Fine defaulter receptions to Scottish penal establishments by crime and offence, 1990–1994[1]

Crime/offence	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994[1]	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Total crimes and offences	6,455	380	7,295	614	7,792	547	8,878	738	8,174	701
Total crimes: sub total	3,104	273	3,434	427	3,649	395	3,895	543	3,502	473
Non-sexual crimes of violence: sub total	42	1	41	3	63	3	63	3	89	4
Homicide	0	0	0	1	3	0	2	0	2	0
Serious assault etc.	17	1	12	0	29	1	27	0	39	3
Handling offensive weapons	14	0	18	0	12	0	14	2	30	0
Robbery	9	0	6	0	15	0	15	0	15	0
Other	2	0	5	2	4	2	5	1	3	1
Crimes of indecency: sub total	10	99	14	151	15	143	12	242	8	162
Sexual assault	0	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	4	0
Lewd and libidinous practices	8	1	4	0	5	0	3	0	3	0
Other	2	98	9	151	8	143	8	242	1	162
Crimes of dishonesty: sub total	2,538	160	2,753	233	2,805	219	2,937	270	2,456	257
Housebreaking	510	1	573	4	484	5	511	5	428	9
Theft by opening lockfast places	184	3	205	2	191	2	195	2	198	0
Theft of a motor vehicle	135	1	172	4	227	2	198	3	169	3
Other theft	1,302	129	1,397	183	1,439	180	1,586	213	1,240	194
Fraud	148	12	121	25	132	11	134	22	125	45
Other	259	14	285	15	332	19	313	25	296	6
Fire-raising, vandalism etc.: sub total	175	3	203	6	208	7	218	7	260	3
Fire-raising	7	0	6	0	6	1	2	1	2	0
Vandalism etc.	168	3	197	6	202	6	216	6	258	3
Other crimes: sub total	339	10	423	34	558	23	665	21	689	47
Crimes against public justice	184	9	230	31	299	18	297	16	365	29
Drugs offences	150	1	187	3	257	5	261	4	318	18
Other	5	0	6	0	2	0	7	1	6	0
Total offences: sub total	3,351	107	3,861	187	4,143	152	4,983	195	4,672	228
Miscellaneous offences: sub total	2,486	102	2,856	170	2,856	138	3,393	180	2,928	202
Petty assault	495	14	492	23	463	17	621	26	505	26
Breach of the peace	1,710	69	2,011	102	2,102	95	2,469	132	2,103	152
Drunkenness	161	6	177	4	136	3	180	3	168	2
Other	120	13	176	41	155	23	123	19	152	22
Motor vehicle offences: sub total	865	5	1,005	17	1,287	14	1,590	15	1,744	26
Reckless and careless driving	72	1	74	0	87	1	74	0	86	0
Drunk driving	155	1	193	2	244	1	220	2	250	0
Speeding	10	0	9	0	14	1	25	1	23	0
Unlawful use of vehicles	579	2	652	13	864	9	1,177	10	1,308	25
Vehicle defect offences	14	0	19	0	15	0	20	0	29	0
Other	35	1	58	2	63	2	74	2	48	1

[1] Information for 1994 is provisional.

Mr. Connarty: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the prison population in Scotland in each year since 1990 by sex and offence. [27674]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The subject of the question relates to matters undertaken by the Scottish Prison Service. I have asked its chief executive, Mr. E. W. Frizzell, to arrange for a reply to be given.

Letter from Mr. E. W. Frizzell to Mr. Michael Connarty dated 15 June 1995:

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton has asked me to reply to your Question about the prison population in Scotland in each year since 1990 by sex and offence.

Information by offence is not available in relation to the average daily prison population. Details of offence type are only collected on reception following sentence. The table below provides information on the average daily prison population by sex for the years 1990–1994.

Average daily population in Scottish penal establishments by sex

Year	Male	Female	Total
1990	4,587	137	4,724
1991	4,696	143	4,839
1992	5,099	158	5,257
1993	5,466	171	5,637
1994	5,408	177	5,585

Miscarriages of Justice

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of alleged miscarriages of justice his Department has considered in each of the last 10 years; and what action has been taken in each case. [27990]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The number of cases in respect of which representations were received by my right hon. Friend are as follows:

1984: 54
1985: 43
1986: 61
1987: 61
1988: 46
1989: 60
1990: 39
1991: 54
1992: 58
1993: 52
1994: 30

Eighteen cases are at present under consideration. Seven cases were referred by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to the Court of Appeal under section 263(1) of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1975. Petitions were refused in all other cases.

Mr. Mullin: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of alleged miscarriages of justice he has referred to the Court of Appeal in each of the past 10 years; and with what result. [277991]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has referred seven cases, relating to eight persons, to the Court of Appeal during the past 10 years. The number of cases in each year and the outcome of the subsequent appeals are set out in the table:

Year of referral	Number of cases referred (persons)	Outcome of appeal
1984	—	—
1985	—	—
1986	1(1)	Conviction quashed
1987	—	—
1988	1(1)	Conviction quashed
1989	1(1)	Conviction quashed
1990	—	—
1991	1(2)	Appeals dismissed
1992	1(1)	Amended verdict of guilty substituted
1993	2(2)	Appeal dismissed/appeal abandoned
1994	—	—

Rape

Mr. Chisholm: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many cases of rape were *(a)* reported to the police, *(b)* reached court and *(c)* resulted in a guilty verdict in (i) 1985 and (ii) 1993. [28245]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Information on the number of cases of rape reported to the police is not collected centrally. The available information is given in the following table:

Number of offences of rape recorded by the police, persons called to court where the main charge was rape and those with a main charge of rape proved in Scotland[1]

Year	Number of offences recorded by the police	Persons called to court[2]	Persons with a charge proved[2]
1985	248	76	39
1993	339	78	40

[1] Cases of attempted rape are included in the above table but cases of assault with intent to rape or ravish are not included.
[2] For persons called to court and with a charge proved only those cases where the main charge was rape are included in the table; all recorded cases of rape are counted even where rape is not the main offence.

Sheriff Courts

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the current position in relation to the review committee chaired by Sheriff Principal Gordon Nicholson into how the programming of business in the sheriff courts could be improved. [28574]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Following an initial report on the programming of business in the sheriff courts, a number of pilot schemes have been introduced and the results of these, with the implications for court programming of new legislative provisions, are shortly to be reviewed by the group under the chairmanship of Sheriff Principal Gordon Nicholson QC.

Hire Vehicles

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what legislation and regulations govern the operation of public hire vehicles at Scotland's airports; what measures are in place to ensure that operators and/or

drivers cannot, by whatever means, refuse to transport passengers on the grounds that the journey is too short or too local; and if he will make a statement. [28527]

Mr. Kynoch: Taxis and private hire vehicles operating at airports may require a licence from the appropriate district or islands council under sections 10 to 23 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 and a permit under airport byelaws drawn up by the airport operator. The terms and conditions of the licences and permits may vary accordingly to area. If the hon. Member has a particular area in mind he may wish to pursue the matter with the relevant authorities. In the case of Glasgow airport, the authorities would be Renfrew district council and the British Airports Authority.

Local Government Finance

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing the amount of *(a)* revenue support grant and *(b)* aggregate external finance allocated to each district council on a per capita basis in the current financial year; if he will explain the formulae which resulted in this calculation; and if he will make a statement. [28537]

Mr. Kynoch: The information requested is set out in the following table. An explanation of how the amounts payable to each authority in 1995–96 were determined is set out in the report to the Local Government Finance (Scotland) Order 1995, copies of which are in the Library.

	1995–96 RSG [1] *Per capita* £	*1995–96 AEF* [1] *Per capita* £
Berwickshire	120.26	121.82
Ettrick and Lauderdale	110.93	112.38
Roxburgh	127.58	129.46
Tweeddale	127.89	129.34
Clackmannan	137.42	139.62
Falkirk	127.10	128.91
Stirling	161.04	162.64
Annandale and Eskdale	97.95	99.33
Nithsdale	111.59	113.17
Stewartry	95.82	97.07
Wigtown	131.55	133.85
Dunfermline	116.86	118.50
Kirkcaldy	127.98	129.96
North-East Fife	130.78	131.85
Aberdeen City	134.25	135.70
Banff and Buchan	119.12	120.35
Gordon	111.20	111.90
Kincardine and Deeside	105.90	106.55
Moray	131.08	132.43
Badenoch and Strathspey	135.23	137.02
Caithness	132.16	133.69
Inverness	113.16	114.61
Lochaber	167.18	168.88
Nairn	111.98	113.56
Ross and Cromarty	172.68	174.32
Skye and Lochalsh	206.15	207.69
Sutherland	177.94	179.46
East Lothian	134.24	135.82
Edinburgh City	181.59	183.88
Midlothian	124.24	125.58
West Lothian	134.32	135.80
Argyll and Bute	228.63	230.58
Bearsden and Milngavie	95.62	96.05
Clydebank	155.73	158.51
Clydesdale	136.71	138.12
Cumbernauld and Kilsyth	120.99	121.91
Cumnock and Doon Valley	138.82	140.96
Cunninghame	147.82	149.67
Dumbarton	127.01	128.82
East Kilbride	126.97	127.43
Eastwood	77.07	77.53
Glasgow City	221.66	225.40
Hamilton	146.23	148.10
Inverclyde	175.00	177.35
Kilmarnock and Loudoun	129.27	131.22
Kyle and Carrick	124.75	126.46
Monklands	159.27	161.74
Motherwell	146.96	149.23
Renfrew	136.72	138.68
Strathkelvin	118.29	119.20
Angus	112.93	114.34
Dundee City	163.97	166.75
Perth and Kinross	126.87	128.32

[1] The per capita figures have been calculated using the Registrar General for Scotland's mid-1993 estimates of total population.

Scottish Homes

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland when he last discussed Her Majesty's Government's policy on the concepts of democracy and accountability with the chairman and chief executive of Scottish Homes; what was the result of these discussions; and if he will make a statement. [28569]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend and I meet the board of Scottish Homes from time to time to discuss a range of issues. I shall next be meeting the board on 4 September. Scottish Homes is accountable to my right hon. Friend and, through him, to the House.

Johnstone Bypass

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland how many road accidents have occurred on the Johnstone bypass since it was opened; how many of these accidents have been fatal; how many have involved serious or critical injury; what assessment he has made of the reasons for the incidence of accidents on this stretch of road; what plans he has to take measures to reduce the potential accident risk; what discussions he has had with Strathclyde regional council on this subject; and if he will make a statement. [28528]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There have been 10 accidents, involving 15 casualties, on the Johnstone bypass since it opened to traffic in May 1993. Four accidents resulted in six fatalities and five accidents resulted in nine serious or slight injuries. Responsibility for the Johnstone bypass, including all road safety matters, rests with the local roads authority, in this case Strathclyde regional council. I understand that the regional council is actively monitoring the route and has already made a number of modifications to reduce the risk of accidents on the road.

Health Trusts and Boards

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what age restrictions exist on membership of health trusts and boards. [27596]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: There are no formal age restrictions on membership of health boards and NHS trusts.

Public Offices

Mrs. Fyfe: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to set uniform age limits for the holding of all public offices appointed by him. [27597]

Mr. Lang: I have no such plans. Appointments are made on merit and suitability, regardless of age.

Gateside School for the Deaf

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the importance of the role performed by the Gateside school for the deaf in Renfrewshire and its future. [28556]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Gateside school makes a valuable contribution to provision for the special educational needs of hearing-impaired children in Strathclyde region. The management of all its schools, including Gateside school, is in the first instance a matter for Strathclyde regional council. After local government reorganisation, it will be for the new Renfrewshire council, and for the other two councils whose schools are currently served by the staff based at Gateside school, to determine how to discharge their statutory duties towards children with special educational needs resulting from hearing impairment in their areas. I am sure that the new councils will recognise the advantages offered by existing and new opportunities for effective and efficient co-operation.

Raymond Gilmour

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the progress of the application on behalf of Raymond Gilmour for the exercise of the prerogative of mercy; and when he expects to reach his conclusion. [28557]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: I refer the hon. Member to my replies of 6 March, *Official Report*, columns *86–87* and of 21 April, *Official Report*, column *215*. Inquiries into the matters raised on Mr. Gilmour's behalf are continuing.

Ferguslie Park Partnership

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the *(a)* names, *(b)* civil service posts, *(c)* designations and *(d)* specific duties of each member of staff who (1) is or (2) has been seconded by the Scottish Office on a whole-time or part-time basis to the Ferguslie park partnership or any of its offshoots or associated companies, trusts, bodies or organisations since its establishment; and if he will make a statement. [28560]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Two members of Scottish office staff are presently on secondment to the Ferguslie park partnership and a further two have completed period of secondment at the partnership. Their details are as follows:

1.

(a) D. R. Dickson

(b) Unified Grade 5

(c) Chief Executive of the Partnership from 1 August 1989 to 31 August 1992

(d) to manage the implementation of the regeneration strategy for Ferguslie Park

2.

(a) A. M. Burnside

(b) Unified Grade 5

(c) Chief Executive of the Partnership from 28 August 1992 and continues in post

(d) continuing management of the implementation of the regeneration strategy for Ferguslie Park

3.

(a) A. C. M. Baker

(b) Senior Executive Officer; Unified Grade 7

(c) Depute Executive from 26 March 1990 to 15 November 1992; Economic Director from 16 November 1992 to 24 October 1994

(d) implementing strategies for regeneration of Ferguslie Park; managing and developing the Partnership Training and Employment Initiative

4.

(a) J. M. Mitchell

(b) Higher Executive Officer

(c) and (d) No specific designation. Short term assignment from February to July 1995.

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of States for Scotland if he will list all contracts awarded by *(a)* Ferguslie park partnership and *(b)* his Department or any other body to which he appoints, to FCB Securities, or its parent, associated or predecessor companies since 1988, or for the latest year for which the information is available; if he will specify the projected and actual value of each contract; and if he will make a statement. [28563]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: Details of the contracts are as follows:

Awarding body	*Company contracted and nature of contract*	*Projected value of contracts in 1995–96 (excluding VAT) £ Thousand*
The Ferguslie Park Training, Economic and Enterprise Development Company Ltd.	FCB Securities security services (since 1989)	25.0
(a) Ferguslie Park Community Centre Ltd.	FCB Securities security services (since spring 1995)	50.5
(b)	FPCH Limited accountancy services (since autumn 1993)	3.0
(a) Craigielea Pre-5 Centre Limited	FPCH Limited wage administration (since spring 1993)	1.0
(b)	FCB Securities security services (since spring 1993)	4.0

Scottish Hospices

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what assessment he has made of the impact of the national lottery on fund raising by Scottish hospices; and if he will make a statement. [28558]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Scottish partnership agency for palliative and cancer care is keeping this under review. A representative of the Scottish Office attends meetings of the agency.

Security Companies

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received *(a)* supporting and *(b)* opposing the registration of security companies; and if he will make a statement. [28559]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: My right hon. Friend has received no specific representations on this issue. As the hon. Gentleman will know, the Home Affairs Select Committee has recently published a report on the private security industry. Although the report applies only to the security industry in England and Wales, we will give careful consideration to its conclusions and recommendations.

Unitary Authorities (Chief Executives)

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the (i) name, (ii) salary and (iii) previous occupation of each chief executive so far appointed by unitary authorities in Scotland; if he will list those unitary authorities which have still to appoint; and if he will make a statement. [28561]

Mr. Kynoch: Chief executives—strictly speaking, heads of paid service—have now been appointed to all of the new Scottish councils. The information requested, including that for the three islands areas, is listed in the following table:

Chief Executives of the New Councils

New Council	*Salary 1 April 1995* £	*Chief Executive*	*Current position*
Aberdeen City	80,000	Mr. Douglas Paterson	Director of Education, Grampian Regional Council
Aberdeenshire	80,000	Mr. Alan Campbell	Chief Executive, Grampian Regional Council
Angus	73,000	Mr. Sandy Watson	Chief Executive, Tayside Regional Council
Argyll and Bute	68,000	Mr. James McLellan	Director of Administration, Argyll and Bute District Council
Clackmannanshire The	58,000	Mr. Robert Allan	Chief Executive, Clackmannan District Council
Dumbarton and Clydebank	73,000	Mr. Michael Watters	District Secretary and Director of Legal and Administrative Services, Dumbarton District Council
Dumfries and Galloway	80,000	Mr. Ian Smith	Chief Executive Dumfries and Galloway Regional Council
Dundee, City of	80,000	Mr. Alex Stephen	Chief Executive, City of Dundee District Council
East Ayrshire	73,000	Mr. David Montgomery	Senior Deputy Director of Education, Strathclyde Regional Council
East Dumbartonshire	73,000	Mr. Cornelius Mallon	Chief Executive, Strathkelvin District Council
East Lothian	65,000	Mr. John Lindsay	Depute Chief Executive and Director of Finance, East Lothian District Council
East Renfrewshire	65,000	Mr. Peter Daniels	Chief Executive, Clydesdale District Council
Edinburgh, City of	93,000	Mr. Tom Aitchison	Chief Executive, Lothian Regional Council
Falkirk	76,000	Mr. Walter Weir	Chief Executive, Falkirk District Council
Fife	89,000	Dr. John Markland	Chief Executive, Fife Regional Council
Glasgow, City of	96,000	Mr. John Anderson	Depute Chief Executive, Strathclyde Regional Council
Highland	84,000	Mr. Arthur McCourt	Assistant Chief Executive, Tayside Regional Council
Inverclyde	68,000	Mr. Graeme Bettison	Senior Depute Director of Administration, Grampian Regional Council
Midlothian	62,000	Mr. Trevor Muir	Chief Executive, Midlothian District Council
Moray	62,000	Mr. Anthony Connell	Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Administration, Grampian Regional Council
North Ayrshire	76,000	Mr. Bernard Devine	Chief Executive, Cunninghame District Council
North Lanarkshire	89,000	Mr. Andrew Cowe	Managing Director, Renfrew District Council
Orkney Islands	58,000	Mr. Ronald Gilbert	Chief Executive, Orkney Islands Council
Perthshire and Kinross	73,000	Mr. Harry Robertson	Chief Executive, Perth and Kinross District Council
Renfrewshire	80,000	Mr. Thomas Scholes	Senior Depute Director of Finance, Strathclyde Regional Council
Shetland Islands	58,000	Mr. Malcolm Green	Chief Executive, Shetlands Islands Council
Scottish Borders	73,000	Mr. Alastair Croall	Depute Chief Executive, Borders Regional Council
South Ayrshire	73,000	Mr. George Thorley	Assistant Chief Executive, Strathclyde Regional Council
South Lanarkshire	89,000	Mr. Alastair J. H. MacNish	Depute Director of Social Work, Strathclyde Regional Council
Stirling	65,000	Mr. Keith Yates	Assistant Chief Executive, Central Regional Council
West Lothian	76,000	Mr. Alex Linkson	Chief Executive and Director of Finance, West Lothian District Council
Western Isles	58,000	Mr. Brian Stewart	Chief Executive, Western Isles Islands Council

Sources:
Local Government Staff Commission and Scottish Joint Negotiating Committee for Local Authority Services.

Illicit Drugs

Mr. McMaster: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland what immediate action he proposes to take to deal with the introduction of new forms of illicit drugs; what resources he will make available to the relevant authorities to stop the use of such drugs at an early stage; what action will be taken against these convicted of dealing in this trade; and if he will make a statement. [28562]

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton: The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 provides a framework for controlling new or existing drugs liable to be misused. Substantial resources are being committed to action against drug misuse across a range of services, thus facilitating the concerted and vigorous response recommended in the report of the Scottish drugs task force, led by my noble and learned friend the Minister of State. Those convicted of trafficking in drugs will be sentenced by the courts according to the nature of the offence and the class of drug involved.

Trunk Roads

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement about progress on construction of trunk road schemes during 1994–95 and those schemes the Government propose to start in Scotland in the next three years. [29410]

Mr. Lang: We continue to make good progress towards the achievement of a safe, high quality trunk road network providing benefits to the whole of Scotland. The programme I am announcing today continues our strategy of upgrading the key routes of major economic importance to Scotland's future and the emphasis we have directed to upgrading the A74 to motorway, the completion of the central Scotland motorway and near-motorway network, and the upgrading of the A1.

The schemes with an estimated cost of more than £3 million each which, subject to schemes satisfying the usual value-for-money criteria, with satisfactory completion of statutory procedures and the necessary preparatory work, are expected to start between April 1995 and March 1998 are:

M6: Paddy's Rickle to Cleuchbrae
M8: Newhouse to Shotts
M8: Bailiston to Newhouse phase 1
A9: Logie Easter to Garrick Bridge
A830: Loch Nan Uamh to Polnish Bridge
A96: Kintore bypass
M8: Newbridge interchange
A1: Haddington to Dunbar
A830: Arisaig to Kinsadel
A68: Dalkeith bypass
M77: Fenwick to B764 (Floak)
M90: Halbeath interchange

This is an ambitious programme requiring substantial levels of investment. The schemes have a total cost of more than £330 million. The Government see an increasing role for private sector finance and management skills in the trunk road business and, accordingly, I have decided that the M6 Paddy's Rickle to Cleuchbrae project will be subject to a tender competition to identify a private consortium to design, build, finance and operate this scheme, which will include taking over the maintenance responsibility for the entire length of upgraded road between Millbank and the Scottish border. That tender competition will start in the summer and it will be a major opportunity for the private sector to increase its involvement in the trunk road business. It shall ensure that the full upgrade of the motorway will be complete by 2000. I am exploring with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport how this strategy might also address the completion of the remaining section of the M6 south of the Scottish border.

My decision to invite the private sector to design, build, finance and operate the scheme is a significant example of how the attraction of private finance can complement public provision. We shall continue actively to explore the potential for further opportunities.

We shall also seek tenders for the first phase of the Baillieston-Newhouse project on the M8 to upgrade and widen the sole remaining non-motorway section of the Edinburgh to Glasgow route in line with long-standing commitments. The three successive phases of the scheme will be complete by 2002. The M8 is the principal link between Scotland's two major cities, and several areas of significant industrial and commercial importance are situated along it. The overall condition of this vital artery must be considered most carefully to ensure that it continues to be able to cater for the ever increasing demands made of it. We shall in the course of this year initiate a detailed study to examine a robust strategy for its refurbishment and upgrading. As a first step in this process, we shall shortly seek tenders for a major contract to reconstruct and upgrade the section between Shotts and Newhouse.

Our programme now includes the commitments I made in relation to the network around the firth of Forth in my announcement earlier this year on the "Setting Forth" proposals—the improvements to the junctions at M8 Newbridge and M90 Halbeath.

Our major construction activity is directed by our primary objective to upgrade Scotland's internal and external motorway links, which are vital to the continuing success of our economy. This is complemented by our continuing commitment to the improvement of the trunk road network elsewhere. During the next three years, I shall devote resources totalling well over £200 million to a range of improvements and continuing maintenance, which will improve the service offered to travellers and increase road safety. The interests of local communities near trunk roads are also being directly addressed in this programme. During the coming year, the work will see important local improvement schemes on the A1 south of Dunbar, the A90 between Perth and Dundee and the A7 south of Hawick, all as part of route action plans carefully designed to put resources where they will secure the greatest benefit. The A76 Kilmarnock to Dumfries route and the A77 will also benefit from such improvements, including traffic calming measures and village gateways. We continue to develop schemes and measures to address urgent needs throughout the network including the A75 and the A96.

I wish also to report on the substantial progress we have made during 1994–95. Fifteen schemes—each with a cost of more than £3 million—were either completed or under way, representing a total investment in excess of £380 million. They include nine separate schemes contributing

to the upgrade of the A74. More than two thirds of the upgraded M74 will be open to traffic by the end of this year. Construction of the M8 extension between Newbridge and the Edinburgh city bypass scheme is also well advanced and should be open this year. Construction also continues on the privately financed Skye bridge, scheduled to open in the autumn, the M77 and the A1 Tranent to Haddington.

The schemes completed in 1994–95, and their costs, were as follows:

M74—Maryville to Fullarton road: £44 million

A830—Morar bypass: £9 million

M6—Cleuchbrae to Dinwoodie Green: £24 million

M6—Dinwoodie Green to Muirhouse: £19 million

M6—Muirhouse to Water of Milk: £39 million

M6—Water of Milk to Ecclefechan: £27 million

M6—Ecclefechan to Eaglesfield phase 1: £15 million

As I announced recently, we are also proceeding with the proposals set out in "Competing For Better Roads", which aim to improve the delivery of maintenance across the trunk road network, through the introduction of private sector management expertise, financial skills and innovative contractual methods.

Taken altogether, this package is very good news indeed for Scotland's road industry and for the users of Scotland's trunk roads.

Sewerage Charges

Mr. Gallie: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if any assistance will be given to domestic consumers when separate charges for domestic sewerage are introduced in 1996–97. [29411]

Mr. Kynoch: At present, local authority expenditure on domestic sewerage is one of the items which make up a householder's council tax bill. It is not easy for householders to work out how much they pay towards the service. That is why we are publishing a leaflet about water and sewerage costs in 1995–96, following the leaflet sent out last year. The leaflet will be distributed to all householders during the next few weeks.

The cost to households for domestic sewerage will be clearer from 1 April 1996, when there will be a separate charge set by the new water and sewerage authority that delivers the service. Only those connected to the public sewerage system will be liable to pay.

As stated during the passage of the Local Government Etc. (Scotland) Act 1994, we intend to see that the change in the financing of domestic sewerage will not of itself produce any increase in the aggregate of council tax and water services bill between 1995–96 and 1996–97. Accordingly, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will make regulations under section 81 of the 1994 Act to reduce charges for domestic sewerage set by the three new public water and sewerage authorities in 1996–97. This transitional relief scheme will be financed by an adjustment to the level of aggregate external finance funding of local authority expenditure. The amount of help we will give will be shown on individual consumers' bills. The full charge will be phased in over a period of time.

Medical Negligence

Dr. Godman: To ask the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list all current alleged medical negligence cases against the NHS by *(a)* type of allegation and *(b)* length of time waiting for settlement. [23303]

Lord James Douglas Hamilton *[holding answer 16 May 1995]:* The number of medical negligence cases against the NHS currently totals 1,195. Information on the type of allegation is not collected centrally.

The length of time since the currently outstanding cases were lodged is as follows:

Time period	*Number of cases*
Within the last 17 months	412
2 years	298
3 years	198
4 years	106
5 years	83
6 years	46
7 years	26
8 years	8
9 years	8
10 years	9
12 years	1

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 261**

SESSION 1994–95

6th June—15th June 1995

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes and cannot therefore, be used in connection with the daily part or weekly Hansard. For these versions use the Fortnightly Index.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instruments etc, under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Speaker and deputies are brought together under the heading 'Speaker's rulings and statements'.

Other contributions by Speaker and deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates and Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates, etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions.*

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Comm = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

A1 Steering Group
589w

A5
Northern Ireland 354w

A12
399–400w

A14
474w

A38
Road traffic 403w

A76
Road accidents 582–5w
Road traffic 665–6w

Abbott, Ms Diane
Debates etc.
Caribbean (15.06.95) 958, 962–3, 965
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 435–8
Housing market (13.06.95) 630
Questions
Electricity supply industry 421–2

Aberdare
Hospitals 485

Aberdeen
Government laboratories 513w

Abortion
305w
Northern Ireland 15–6w

Absent parents
Scotland 117–8w

Access to buildings
Theatres 201w

Access to countryside
Set-aside schemes 310w

Accident and emergency departments
332w
Family doctors 27–8w
Hospital admissions 31w, 424w

Accidents
Farms 358w

Accommodation Level Crossings Bill (HL) 1994/95
Debates etc.
3R order read (08.06.95) 303, (15.06.95) 873

Accountants
NHS 361w

"Accounting Simplifications Consultation Paper"
60w

ACP countries
EC aid 499–500w
Overseas aid 501–2w

Administration of justice
Scotland (07.06.95) 215–94

Admission charges
Buckingham Palace 278w
Museums and galleries 199–200w
Windsor Castle 278w

Adoption
Entry clearances 377w
Step-parents 626–7w

Adult education
Welsh language 405w

Advertising
NHS trusts 32w

Aerospace industry
574w

African National Congress
Bombings 125w

Age discrimination
391w
Vacancies 390–1w

Aggregate external finance
Scotland 673–4w

Agricultural land
661–2w

Agricultural land*—*continued
Planning permission 486w
Sewage 250w, 378w
Tenant farmers 304–5

Agricultural policy
310w

Agricultural products
305–6

Agricultural subsidies
Spain 313–4
Viticulture 514w

Agriculture
Air pollution control 383w

Aid financed trade
502w
Indonesia 56–9w, 504–6w, 568–9w, 633–4w
Malaysia 304w

AIDS
Forensic science 425–6w, 481w
Prisoners 645w

Aids for handicapped
424w
Scotland 589w

Ainger, Mr Nick
Questions
Dental services, Wales 404w
Electricity Act 1989, Planning inquiries 61w
Excise duties, Petrol alternatives 93w, 399w
Family doctors, Deprivation indicators 410–3w
Family doctors, Wales 410w
Petrol alternatives, Plant power 38w
Petroleum exploration licences, Environmental impact assessment 237–8w

Ainsworth, Mr Peter
Questions
Rural areas 315–6

Ainsworth, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 913
Questions
Employment discrimination, Older workers 443w
Immigrant detainees 132w
Immigrant detainees, Costs 135w
Motor vehicle theft 131–2w
Planning permission, City of Westminster 293–4w, 540w
Planning permission, Codes of practice 248–9w
Property development, City of Westminster 293–4w

Air accidents
Chinook helicopters 597–8w

Air force bases
Export of live animals 192w

Air pollution
Publicity 382–3w

Air pollution control
383w
Agriculture 383w

Air safety
Equipment 532w

Air transport
First aid 40w
RAF Brize Norton 437w
USA 228w
Weapons 143w

Aircrew
Conditions of employment 531w

Airlines
Subsidies 318–9

Airports
Taxis 672–3w

Aitken, Rt Hon Jonathan*, *Chief Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
British Manufacturing and Research Company 874
Economic forecasting 432–3w
Economic growth, Unemployment 881–2
Industrial investment 628w
Public expenditure 884
Public investment 433w
Public sector borrowing requirement 629w, 631–2w
Small businesses 873–4

Alcoholic drinks duties
Tax yields 88–9w

Alison, Rt Hon Michael*, *Second Church Estates Commissioner
Questions
Church Commissioners, Company accounts 556w
Church Commissioners, Oral questions 81w
Church Commissioners, Subsidiary companies 555–6w
Church of England, Pension funds 556–7w

Allason, Mr Rupert
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 909
Questions
Business questions 899

Alternative energy
268–9w, 576w

Alton, Mr David
Questions
Abortion 305w
China, Dechen, Joseph Jin 287w
China, Family planning 303–4w, 503–4w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Finance 303w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Property transfer 302w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, UK contributions 302w
National Lottery 372w
Overseas aid, Family planning 302–3w
Overseas aid, Primary health care 303w
Sefton Park Palm House 111w
UN Conference on Women 287w
Video recordings, Prosecutions 482w

Alyn and Deeside
Unemployment 480

Ambulance services
Early retirement 355w
Emergency calls 31w
Private sector 189w

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 852–4
Questions
Public expenditure 884
School transport 590–1

Ammunition
British Airways 143w

Amway United Kingdom
602w

Ancram, Mr Michael*, *Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
Abortion, Northern Ireland 15–6w
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools 635w
Economic surveys, Northern Ireland 356w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 353w
Farms, Northern Ireland 463w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 17–21w
Free school meals, Northern Ireland 636–7w

Ancram, Mr Michael—continued
Further education colleges, Northern Ireland 353–4w, 465–7w
Hotel and catering industry, Further education colleges 351–3w
International Fund for Ireland, USA 354w
Irish Sea, Special areas of conservation 21–2w
Local government constituencies, Northern Ireland 22w
Northern Ireland Electricity, Privatisation 464w
Rural Cottage Holidays 463w
School closures, Northern Ireland 635–6w
Water distribution, South Down 12–4w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Questions
Local government reform, Wales 487

Anderson, Ms Janet
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 428–30
Questions
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Public expenditure 309–10
Prosecutions, Liverpool 6–7w
Rwanda, Armed conflict 194–5
Women's prisons, Prison sentences 176w

Anglesey
Radioactive waste disposal 490w

Angola
International aid from international bodies 59w
Mines 59w, 191w
Peace keeping operations 221w

Animal breeding
Bulls 313–4

Animal experiments
Cosmetics 605w
Tobacco 524–5w

Animal welfare
Export of live animals 306–7, 310–1
Pets 641w
Veal 309w

Anniversaries
World War II 24w

Anthrax
Seeds 436w

Antibiotics
Veterinary drugs 431w

Antitank missiles
596w

Antrim
Civil service manpower 16–7w

Arbuthnot, Mr James, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept for Social Security
Questions
Employees' contributions 421–2w, 494w
Employers' contributions 421–2w, 494–5w
Employers' contributions, Employment opportunities 495w
National insurance, Disclosure of information 196w
National insurance, Personal records 116–7w
Personal pensions 197–8w
Retirement pensions 117w
Retirement pensions, British residents abroad 269–70w
Self-employed 195–6w, 647w
Social security payments 196–7w
War pensions, Nuclear weapons tests 196w

Archaeological sites
52w

Archives
Churchill, Winston LS 24w, 50–1w, 94w, 278–9w, 442w, 517w
Former ministers 25w
Ownership 439w

Ardrossan bypass
212w

Argyle and Clyde Health Board
Cancer 586–8w

Armagh Observatory and Planetarium (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(12.06.95) 559

Armed conflict
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1–3, 12, 139w, 193w, 199–201, 207, 286w, 372–3w, 478w, 886
Rwanda 194–5, 220w
Slovenia 286–7w

Armed forces
6–7
Defence research 365w
Homosexuality 6, 12
Russia 145w
Sex discrimination 6–7

Armed forces casualties
595w
Compensation 192w, 598w
Hospitals 338w

Armed forces deployment
Belize 193
Bosnia-Herzegovina 139w, 200–1, 337–8w
Bovington 140–1w
Greater London 532–3w
Inspections 533w
Lulworth 140–1w
Property transfer 194w
Wales 10

Armed forces discharges
Pregnant women 5–6
Royal Irish Regiment 7

Armed forces housing
10, 365w, 438w
Cardiff 438w
Empty housing 4, 9–10

Armed forces officers
Ethnic minorities 364–5w
Navy 296w
Official residences 363w

Armed forces reserves
7–8

Armed forces training
595w
Mines 437w
RAF Topcliffe 193–4w

Arms embargoes
Iraq 198–9

Arms exports
220w

Arms to Iraq Inquiry
15–6, 18, 434w
Attorney General 385–6w, 527w, 640–1w
Dept of Social Security 647w
Dept of Trade and Industry 579–80w
Disclosure of information 373–4w, 565w, 601w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 377w, 555w, 599–600w
Legal costs 373–4w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 650w
Ministry of Defence 365w, 535–6w, 597w
Prime Minister 530w, 601w
Treasury 516–7w
Waldegrave, William 650w

Arms trade
Indonesia 779
Nigeria 603w
Rwanda 195
West Africa 603w

Armstrong, Ms Hilary
Questions
Economic growth, Unemployment 881
Hospital consultants, Disciplinary proceedings 361w

Army
EC countries 11

Army Air Force and Naval Discipline Acts (Continuation) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(14.06.95) 862

Army in Northern Ireland
138w

Arnold, Mr Jacques
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 52, 63, 70, 76–82, 84, 99–100
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 813
Questions
Belize 193
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 1–2
Business questions 896
Council of Ministers 223–6w
EC Foreign Affairs Council 226–7w
Personal taxation 628w
Special Operations Executive, Public records 222w

Arnold, Sir Thomas
Debates etc.
Caribbean (15.06.95) 953–7
Questions
BBC External Services, Iran 375–6w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 139w
Caribbean, British dependent territories 376w
Citizen's Charter, Enforcement 492
Common agricultural policy 307
Copyright, EC law 368w
Financial Services Act 1986, Prosecutions 239w
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 218w

Art works
372w
Insurance 200–1w
Royal residences 202w
Tax allowances 340w

Arts Council grants
Theatres 371w

Arts Council (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(12.06.95) 559

Asbestos
Construction materials 114w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 800
Questions
Business questions 894

Ashdown, Rt Hon Paddy
Questions
Inflation 887

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
Inflation 879–80

Assisted places scheme
7–8w
Wales 76w

Association of Chief Police Officers
Immobilisation of vehicles 133–4w

AST Training
579w
Redundancy pay 327w

Asthma
Medical treatments 257–8w
Scotland 150–1w
Wales 257–8w, 570w

Atkins, Mr Robert, Minister of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
Air pollution, Publicity 382–3w
Air pollution control 383w
Air pollution control, Agriculture 383w
Beaches, Warning signs 608w
Birds, Nature conservation 295–6w

***Atkins, Mr Robert**—continued*
Darwin initiative 486w
Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations, Shipbuilding 251w
Hedges and ditches 383w
International Conference on the Protection of the North Sea 111w
Land pollution 610w
National Rivers Authority 609w
Nature conservation 488w
North Sea, Pollution 294–5w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nottinghamshire 113–4w
Sewage, Agricultural land 250w
Sewage, Industrial health and safety 108–9w
Special areas of conservation 608–9w
Special areas of conservation, Peterborough 609w
UN Convention on Biological Diversity 486–7w
Water and sewerage companies 111w

Atkinson, Mr David
Debates etc.
European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between EC and Russian Federation and Ukraine) Orders (08.06.95) 363–5
Questions
Betting and gaming duties, Tax yields 90w
Common fisheries policy 314
Gaming clubs 127w
Hotel and catering industry, EC Social Charter 443w

Atomic Weapons Establishment
Industrial health and safety 101–2w
Licensing 142w
Nuclear safety 142w
Radioactive waste disposal 142w

Attorney General
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 385–6w, 527w, 640–1w
Crown immunity 641w
Maternity leave 272w
Paternity leave 272w

Audit
Companies 246w

Austin-Walker, Mr John
Questions
Elderly, Standard of living 25w
Retirement pensions 117w

Autism
Wales 357w

Automated credit transfer
Industrial disablement benefits 492–3w

Automation
Social security payments 116w

Availability for work
446–8w

Average earnings
Isle of Wight 444w
University teachers 9–10w

AWE Aldermaston
Construction 141–2w
Greenpeace 144w
Radioactive waste disposal 144w
Water pollution 142–3w

AWE Burghfield
Construction 141–2w

Axle weights
276w

Ayrshire
Community hospitals 469–70w
Training 215w

Baby milks
Sponsorship 426w

Bacchus, Kasim Mohamed
Legal aid 440–1w

Back to work bonus scheme
494w

Baginton Airport
Export of live animals 212w

Baglan Hospital
67–8w

***Baker, Mr Nicholas**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Home Office*
Debates etc.
Fire services, North Yorkshire (14.06.95) 763–6
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 857–62
Questions
Animal experiments, Tobacco 524–5w
Drug crimes, Nigeria 124w
Entry clearances, Adoption 377w
Fire regulations, EC law 481w
Fire services, Wales 341w
Firearms 522w
Gaming clubs 127w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 482–3w
Humphreys, Emma, Homicide 382w
Identity cards 125w
Immigrant detainees 132w
Immigrant detainees, Costs 135w
Immigration 121w
Nuclear shelters, Property transfer 641–2w
Pets, Animal welfare 641w
Political refugees, Appeals 382w
Political refugees, Belgium 382w
Probation and aftercare, Finance 178–80w
Probation officers 179w
Probation officers, Training 125w
Royal Life Saving Society 120w
Schengen Agreement 122–3w
Smoke alarms 128–9w
Theatre 522w
Viruses, Immigration officers 120w

Balance of trade
93w, 453w
Tourist industry 90w

***Baldry, Mr Tony**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office*
Debates etc.
Caribbean (15.06.95) 957–66
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 35–46, 53–4, 56, 82, 85–8, 106–13
Cyprus (14.06.95) 746–50
Football, Hooliganism (08.06.95) 385–6, 390–6
South Asia (09.06.95) 474–8
Questions
Abortion 305w
ACP countries, EC aid 499–500w
ACP countries, Overseas aid 501–2w
Aid financed trade 502w
Angola, International aid from international bodies 59w
Angola, Mines 59w, 191w
Angola, Peace keeping operations 221w
Bangladesh, Grameen Bank 190w
Bangladesh, Overseas aid 302w
BBC External Services, Iran 375–6w
British embassies 210
British residents abroad 219w
Cameroon, Overseas aid 509w
Cameroon, Rain forests 191–2w
Caribbean, British dependent territories 376w
China, Family planning 303–4w, 503–4w
Deserts, Overseas aid 59w, 504w, 566w
Developing countries, Debts 59w
Eastern Europe, EC aid 304–5w
EC Development Council 191w
Entry clearances, Overseas workers 479w
Indonesia, Aid financed trade 56–9w, 504–6w, 568–9w, 633–4w
Indonesia, Forestry 567–8w, 634w
Indonesia, Ministers' visits abroad 55w
Indonesia, Navigational aids 381w
Indonesia, Overseas loans 55–6w, 381w
Indonesia, Police training 57w
Indonesia, Power stations 567w
Indonesia, Radio 566–8w

***Baldry, Mr Tony**—continued*
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Finance 303w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, Property transfer 302w
International Planned Parenthood Federation, UK contributions 302w
Kashmir 217–8w
Kashmir, Religious buildings 217w
Kenya, Constitutions 220–1w
Kenya, Members 221w
Liberia, Overseas aid 305w
Madagascar, Overseas aid 509w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 304w
Malaysia, Forest products 634w
Nigeria, Democracy 601w
Non-governmental organisations, Overseas aid 568w
Official visits, Journalists 221–2w
Overseas aid, Employment opportunities 60w
Overseas aid, Family planning 302–3w
Overseas aid, Plant power 506–7w
Overseas aid, Primary health care 303w
Overseas Development Administration, Contingency reserve 54–5w
Parliamentary questions, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 599w
Rwanda, Armed conflict 194–5, 220w
Rwanda, Arms trade 195
Rwanda, Foreign relations 220w
Southern Africa Development Community, Bilateral aid 497–500w
Southern Africa Development Community, EC aid 496–7w
Southern Africa Development Community, Overseas aid 495–6w
St Helena, Overseas aid 507–8w
UK contributions, International aid from international bodies 508–10w
World Bank 190–1w
World Summit for Social Development 502–3w

Ballistic missile defence
364w

Ballistic missiles
Russia 13–4

Bamber, Jeremy
Radio programmes 280w

Bangladesh
Grameen Bank 190w
Overseas aid 302w
Overseas trade 240w
Primary health care 303w
Trade missions 240w

Bank of England
396w, 630w
Monetary policy 90w

Bank services
Charities 275w

Banks
Profitability 83w

Banks, Mr Matthew
Questions
EC Finance Council 203–4w
Economic policy 517w
Inheritance tax, Tax rates and bands 266w
Personal equity plans 628w
Tradepoint Financial Networks 203w
Treasury, Cash limits 203w
Urban railways, Government grants to local authorities 531w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 406, 425, 439, 442–5
European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between EC and Russian Federation and Ukraine) Orders (08.06.95) 362, 365, 370, 372–3
Football, Hooliganism (08.06.95) 376–88, 391–3, 395–6

Banks, Mr Tony—continued
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 811, 814–6, 819, 822–3, 836–9, 843, 859
Stratford School (14.06.95) 770–1
Questions
Bulls, Animal breeding 314
Business questions 897
Electricity supply industry 422

Barnes, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 841–4
Questions
Business questions 327, 900
Council of Ministers 193–4
Employment schemes 584
Nuclear non proliferation 13

Barnoldswick
Low flying 436w
Vacancies 101w

Barnsley
Hard core unemployed 586–7

Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council
655w

Barristers
Oaths 439–40w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Questions
Industry training organisations 103w
Investors in people 99–100w, 283w
Unemployment, Statistics 581
Vocational guidance, Contracts for services 102w

Bath
Government grants to local authorities 249–50w
Ministry of Defence 297w

Battle, Mr John
Questions
Aids for handicapped 424w
Aids for handicapped, Scotland 589w
Balance of trade 453w
Employment level 98–9w
Epilepsy 423–4w
Epilepsy, Disabled workers 386w
Epilepsy, Driving licences 329w
Epilepsy, Health education 415–6w
Epilepsy, Prescription drugs 336w
Epilepsy, Pupils 415w
Epilepsy, Special edcation 484–5w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 482–3w
Import penetration 453w
Intensive care, Yorkshire and Humberside 426w
Part-time employment 96w
Phenobarbitone 425w
Technology foresight programme 491–2

Bayley, Mr Hugh
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 58, 69–70, 73, 80, 82–8
Fire services, North Yorkshire (14.06.95) 761, 764
Questions
Influenza, Vaccination 624w
Residential care, Elderly 71–2w, 115w, 366–7w
Residential care, Income support 115w
Technology foresight programme 380w
Uniform business rate 106w

BBC
53w
Independent producers 200w

BBC External Services
Iran 375–6w
Iraq 375–6w

Beaches
Warning signs 608w

Beckett, Rt Hon Margaret
Questions
Accident and emergency departments, Hospital admissions 31w
Cancer, Medical treatments 308w
Cancer, Ovaries 625–6w
Committee on Standards in Public Life, NHS 187w
Health service staff, Private sector 626w
Hepatitis, Haemophilia 307w
HIV infection, Compensation 308–9w
Neurology, Sussex 307–8w
NHS, Executives 563w
NHS trusts 28w

Beith, Rt Hon A J
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 398–9, 405–6, 415–8, 424–6, 431
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 519–21
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 16
Palace of Westminster, Fire services 328w

Belfast
Civil service manpower 467w
Fixed penalties 210–1w

Belfast Institute of Further and Higher Education
465–6w

Belgium
Political refugees 382w

Belize
193
Armed forces deployment 193

Bell, Mr Stuart
Questions
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 777–8

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Questions
Economic and monetary union 207
Single regeneration budget 613w

Bellwin scheme
Weymouth and Portland Borough Council 251w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
Taxis, Touting 135–6w

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Questions
Arms trade, Nigeria 603w
Arms trade, West Africa 603w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Industrial health and safety 101–2w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Licensing 142w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Nuclear safety 142w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Radioactive waste disposal 142w
AWE Aldermaston, Construction 141–2w
AWE Aldermaston, Radioactive waste disposal 144w
AWE Aldermaston, Water pollution 142–3w
Road Regulation Act 1984, Orders and regulations 531w

Benton, Mr Joe
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 682–3

Beresford, Sir Paul, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Questions
Complaints against central government, Dept of the Environment 107w
Consultants, Dept of the Environment 105–6w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of the Environment 106w
Dept of the Environment, Land acquisition 296w, 541–2w

Beresford, Sir Paul—continued
EC grants and loans, Merseyside 613w
Environment protection, Countryside 488w
Genetically modified organisms 379w
Genetically modified organisms, Environmental impact assessment 609–10w
Greenbelt 108w
Greenbelt, Wakefield 109–10w
Local Investment Fund 111w
Maternity leave, Dept of the Environment 294w
Nature conservation, Old Denaby 541w
Noise control 109w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of the Environment 541w, 611w
Planning permission, Agricultural land 486w
Planning permission, City of Westminster 293–4w, 540w
Planning permission, Codes of practice 248–9w
Property development, City of Westminster 293–4w
Property Services Agency, Privatisation 613–4w
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Performance standards 542w
Research, Environment protection 488w
Sefton Park Palm House 111w
Sites of special scientific interest, Thorne Moors 540w
Theatres, Ilfracombe 112w
Urban development corporations 384w

Berkshire
Local government reform 384w
Roads 400–1w
Transport policy 400w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Attorney General 641w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Dept of Social Security 647w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Legal costs 373–4w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 650w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Ministry of Defence 597w

Berry, Mr Roger
Questions
Coal mining, Derelict land 453w

Betting and gaming duties
Tax yields 90w

Betts, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 911, 941–4
Housing market (13.06.95) 623, 638, 644, 673–8

Bichan, Roy
Welsh Development Agency 358w

Biffen, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 920–1

Bilateral aid
Southern Africa Development Community 497–500w

Billing
Company liquidations 790
Dept of Trade and Industry 789–90

Biodiversity
431–2w

Birds
Cardiff Bay barrage 80w, 414w
Nature conservation 295–6w

Birmingham City Hospital
(12.06.95) 560–78

Blaenau Gwent
Low pay 484

Blair, Rt Hon Tony
Questions
Economic and monetary union 591
Income support, Mortgages 316–7

Blood
331w

Blood sports
Forestry Commission 467w

Blood transfusion services
Brentwood 189w, 331w
Cambridge 331w
Privatisation 624w

Blunkett, Mr David
Questions
Chinley School Derbyshire 519w
Departmental publications 290–1w
Free school meals 291–2w
General certificate of secondary education, Languages education 637–8w
Grants for education support and training 292w
National Youth Agency 292w
Pre-school education 416w
Pre-school education, Education vouchers 484w
Pre-school education, School population 521w
Pupils, Ethnic monitoring 416–7w
School administration, Administrative delays 291w
School choice, Wales 290w
Teachers, Pay 417–9w

Board of Inland Revenue
see Inland Revenue

Body, Sir Richard
Questions
Health visitors, Manpower 623w

Body armour
Royal Ulster Constabulary 466w

Bombings
African National Congress 125w

Bombs
Portland 251w

Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Questions
Defence equipment 192w

Booth, Mr Hartley
Debates etc.
Cyprus (14.06.95) 741–2
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 802, 839–41
Questions
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Cash limits 186w
Economic growth, Unemployment 881
UN Commission on Sustainable Development 614–5w

Boscombe Down
Manpower 145–6w

Bosnia-Herzegovina
Armed conflict 1–3, 12, 139w, 193w, 199–201, 207, 286w, 372–3w, 478w, 886
Armed forces deployment 139w, 200–1, 337–8w
Hostages 372–3w, 480w
International assistance 477w
Ministers 477w
Peace keeping operations 337w, 555w
Postal services 599w
Rapid deployment forces 337–8w
Recognition of states 477w
UN Protection Force 139w
USA 337w

***Boswell, Mr Tim**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education*
Debates etc.
Luton University, Finance (07.06.95) 174–7
Questions
Departmental correspondence, Dept for Education 11w
Departmental publications 290–1w

***Boswell, Mr Tim**—continued*
Dept for Education, Motor vehicles 520w
Engineering education 8w
Further education teachers, Early retirement 416w
Land acquisition, Dept for Education 7w
Maternity leave, Dept for Education 290w
National Youth Agency 292w
Parliamentary questions, Dept for Education 639w
Student grants 483–4w, 521–2w
Student grants, Dependants 483w
Student grants, Social security benefits 483w
Student loans, Debt collection 483w
Student numbers 415w
University teachers, Average earnings 9–10w
University teachers, Education and industry 484w

Bottomley, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 127–9, 131
Low incomes (07.06.95) 180, 182
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 351–2
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 517
Questions
Barristers, Oaths 439–40w
Channel Three 53w
Channel Four 52–3w
Channel Four, Finance 371w
Cinemas, Monopoly 238–9w
Election expenditure 494
House prices 594

Boundary Commission for England
125w

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
327w

Bovington
Armed forces deployment 140–1w

Bowden, Sir Andrew
Questions
Social security payments, Automation 116w

***Bowis, Mr John**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health*
Questions
Aids for handicapped 424w
Child abuse 626w
Children, Local government services 188w
Children Act 1989 188w
Children in care 625w
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 563w
Community care, Local government expenditure 429w
Community care plans 31w
Epilepsy 423–4w
Foster care 36w
Handicapped, Personal social services 562–4w
Home care services, Local government expenditure 429w
Hospital discharges 332–3w
Housing improvement, Kirklees Borough Council 429w
Hyperactivity 427–8w
Local government social services 562w
Mental health community care, European Convention on Human Rights 333w
Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill (HL) 1994/95 332w
Mental health services, Expenditure 334w
Mental illness 30w
Mental patients, Hospital beds 335w
Mentally disturbed offenders 30w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Hospital staff 36w
Mentally ill, Homelessness 30w, 426–7w
Mentally ill, Hospital discharges 428w
Residential care of children, Secure accommodation 34w

***Bowis, Mr John**—continued*
Schizophrenia, Community nurses 335w
Secure psychiatric units, Hospital beds 333–4w
Suicide, Mentally ill 306w
Temazepam 624–5w

Bradford
Civil disorder 888

Bradley, Mr Keith
Questions
Income support, Young people 645–6w
Social security benefits, Mortgages 646w

Brandreth, Mr Gyles
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 615
Questions
Business questions 901
Chartermark scheme 493
Dept of Employment, Cash limits 209–10w
Inflation 879
Space technology 576w

Brazier, Mr Julian
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 509
Questions
Evidence, Children 525w

Brazil
Military attaches 284w

Brent Spar
65w, 214w, 274w, 889

Brentwood
Blood transfusion services 189w, 331w

Bridges
River Severn 406w

Bright, Sir Graham
Debates etc.
Luton University, Finance (07.06.95) 170–4
Questions
Agricultural policy 310w

Bristol
Derelict land 453w

Bristol Cancer Help Centre
(14.06.95) 751–8

British Airways
Ammunition 143w

British Coal Corporation
Loans 267w

British dependent territories
Caribbean 376w

British embassies
198, 210
Poland 208

British Fluoridation Society
34–5w

British Gas
Productivity 785

British Manufacturing and Research Company
788, 874
Ministerial statements (13.06.95) 595–606

British Rail
Privatisation 235w, 481–2, 616w, 622w

British residents abroad
219w
Retirement pensions 269–70w

British Steel Corporation
Hunterston 215w

British Telecom
Members' correspondence 605w

Broadcasting
Ministers 25w

Brodsworth Hall
606w

Brooke, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 639

Brown, Mr Gordon
Questions
Economic and monetary union 875
Electricity supply industry 419–23
Inflation 877

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, Rep and 3R (12.06.95) 548–50, 552–3, 556–7
Questions
Community care plans 31w
Customs and Excise, Newcastle upon Tyne 85–6w
Doctors' list of patients 29w, 76w
Doctors' list of patients, Scotland 150w
Emergency calls 331w
Evidence, Children 129–30w
Family doctors, Accident and emergency departments 27–8w
Health service staff, Pay 29w
Hospital discharges 332–3w
Mental health community care, European Convention on Human Rights 333w
Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill (HL) 1994/95 332w
Mental health services, Expenditure 334w
Mental illness 30w
Mental patients, Hospital beds 335w
Mentally disturbed offenders 30w, 120–1w
Mentally ill, Homelessness 30w
NHS, Contracts for services 360w
NHS and private practice 332w
NHS trusts 28w
NHS trusts, Contracts for services 625w
NHS trusts, Health insurance 332w, 359w
NHS trusts, Nurses 335w
Operating theatres, Private patients 360w
Oral contraceptives 307w
Probation officers 179w
Psychiatric nurses 335w
Schizophrenia, Community nurses 335w
Secure psychiatric units, Hospital beds 333–4w
Suicide, Mentally ill 306w
Welsh Office, Management consultants 68w

***Browning, Mrs Angela**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Questions
Crops, Genetically modified organisms 649w
Export of live animals 513w
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 310–1
Export of live animals, Baginton Airport 212w
Export of live animals, Dogs 377–8w
Export of live animals, Ritual slaughter 512–3w
Export of live animals, Treaty of Rome 513w
Food consumption, Buy British 303–4
Food hygiene, EC law 648–9w
Food labelling 511w, 566w
Food labelling, Genetically modified organisms 511w
Lindane 309w
Livestock, Veterinary drugs 509–10w
Meat, Exports 311w
Meat Hygiene Service 310–1w
Nutrition and health 211–2w
Nutrition and health, Children 311–2, 565w
Organophosphorous pesticides 649w
Pesticides, EC action 378w
Primates, Import of live animals 510–1w, 647–8w
Rural areas 379w
Sheep dipping 514w
Slaughterhouses 512w
Transport of animals, EC law 211w
Veal, Animal welfare 309w

***Browning, Mrs Angela**—continued*
Veterinary drugs, Antibiotics 431w

Bruce, Mr Ian
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Bovington 140–1w
Bellwin scheme, Weymouth and Portland Borough Council 251w
Business questions 330
Orders and regulations 441w

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Bank of England, Monetary policy 90w
Dental charges 36w
Electricity supply industry 421
Employees' contributions 421–2w, 494w
Employers' contributions 421–2w, 494–5w
Employers' contributions, Employment opportunities 495w
Income tax 516w
Inflation 91w, 876
Kintore bypass 367w
Museums and galleries, Admission charges 199–200w
NHS finance 362w
Public sector borrowing requirement 629w, 631–2w
Railway fares 474w
VAT 392w, 433w
VAT, Energy prices 392w

Brussels
Ministers' visits abroad 70w

Buckingham Palace
Admission charges 278w

Buckinghamshire
Hospitals 33–4w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 200

Building industry
109w
Contracts 404w
Dept of Transport 404w

Building societies
246–7w

Building workers
450w

Bulls
Animal breeding 313–4

Burden, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Birmingham City Hospital (12.06.95) 569–72, 575

Burnley
Income support 270w

***Burt, Mr Alistair**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Social Security*
Debates etc.
Low incomes (07.06.95) 181–5
Questions
Maintenance, Children 117–8w, 422w, 492w
Maintenance, Prisoners 538–9w
Poverty 538w
Social security benefits, Lone parents 195w
World Summit for Social Development 493w

Bus services
44–6w
Darlington 45w

Business motions
(06.06.95) 118, (09.06.95) 470

Business questions
322–30, 893–902

Business statements
321, 891–902

Butcher, Mr John
Questions
Business questions 893–4
Common fisheries policy 211w
Police, Disciplinary proceedings 126w
West Midlands Police, Disciplinary proceedings 126–7w

Butler, Mr Peter
Questions
Defence Postal and Courier Services, Performance standards 534w
Fisheries 309w
Overseas aid, Employment opportunities 60w

Butterfill, Mr John
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 16
Minimum wage 878

Buy British
Food consumption 303–4

Byers, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 601–2
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Attorney General 385–6w, 527w, 640w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Dept of Trade and Industry 579–80w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Disclosure of information 373w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 377w, 555w, 599–600w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Ministry of Defence 365w, 535–6w, 597w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Prime Minister 530w, 601w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Treasury 516–7w
Citizen's Charter, Compensation 593–4w
Defence Research Agency 336–7w
Further education teachers, Early retirement 416w
Gas supply industry, Licensing 66–7w, 368w
Government shareholding, Ministry of Defence 148w
Government shareholding, Scottish Office 170w
Insolvency Service 343–4w
Navy, Universities 143w
Official receiver, Newcastle upon Tyne 343–4w
Teachers, Early retirement 8w
Viticulture, Agricultural subsidies 514w

Cable television
Local broadcasting 53w
Thurrock 278w

Cambridge
Blood transfusion services 331w

Camelot Group
Profits 592–3

Cameroon
Overseas aid 509w
Rain forests 191–2w

Campbell, Mrs Anne
Questions
Computers in schools, Wales 406w
Industrial investment 576w
Mortgage relief 890
Technology foresight programme 491

Campbell, Mr Menzies
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 221–4, 228, 230, 233, 236, 256–7, 262–3
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 44–5, 62–4, 97, 100, 109–10
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 2–3, 199–200
Tibet, Human rights 480w

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 603
Electoral Reform Bill, 1R (13.06.95) 611
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 334, 343, 350–1
Oral question time intervention (08.06.95) 317–8
Select committees, Points of order (08.06.95) 332
Questions
Amway United Kingdom 602w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 200
Business questions 325, 897
Economic and monetary union 885
Government Communications Headquarters 26–7w
GP fundholders, Cumbria 428w
Military aircraft, West Cumbria 193w
"PRODCOM" 261–2w
Unemployment, Cumbria 588

Cancer
Argyle and Clyde Health Board 586–8w
Counselling 559–60w
Medical treatments 308w
Ovaries 625–6w
Young people 559–60w

Capital allowances
392–4w

Capital gains tax
Tax assessment 515w

Car ownership
Wales 490w

Caravan sites
Rates and rating 391–2w

Cardiff
Armed forces housing 438w

Cardiff Bay barrage
Birds 80w, 414w

Caribbean
(15.06.95) 953–66
British dependent territories 376w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, Rep and 3R (12.06.95) 549, 551–2, 554
Questions
Ambulance services, Private sector 189w
Asthma, Medical treatments 257w
Asthma, Wales 257–8w, 570w
Blood transfusion services, Brentwood 189w
British Rail, Privatisation 481–2
Committee on Standards in Public Life, NHS 187w
Countryside Council for Wales 662w
Family practitioner services, Crime 188w
Fluoridation 563w
Health service staff, Conditions of employment 27w
Health service staff, Pay 335–6w
Ministers' visits abroad, Brussels 70w
NHS, Drugs 188–9w
Paramedical staff 189–90w
Planning permission, Wales 258w
Welsh language, Public utilities 71w

Carlisle, Mr John
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 824, 829–30, 834–5, 840, 844–9, 861

Cash, Mr William
Questions
Milk, Production quotas 310w
Social security finance, EC countries 421w
Treaty on European Union 554w

Cash limits
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 186w, 260w
Dept for Education 205w
Dept of Employment 209–10w
Dept of National Heritage 200w

Cash limits—continued
Dept of the Environment 250–1w
Dept of Trade and Industry 238w
Dept of Transport 227–8w
Home Office 179–80w
Northern Ireland Office 302w
Scottish Office 217w
Treasury 203w
Treasury Solicitor's Dept 185w

Catamarans
Passengers 616w

Cellular phones
Dept of Social Security 118w

Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency
Information superhighway 7–8w

Central Europe
EC external relations (07.06.95) 294

Central Office of Information
Performance standards 622–3w

Central Science Laboratory
1–3w

Central Statistical Office
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys 92w

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Cash limits 186w, 260w
Maternity leave 275w
Paternity leave 275w

Chancellor of the Exchequer
see Treasury

Channel Three
53w

Channel Four
52–3w
Finance 371w

Channel tunnel
Railway network 40w

Channel Tunnel Safety Authority
Annual reports 399w

Charities
Bank services 275w
Schools 215w
Scotland 275w
Technology colleges 520w

Chartermark scheme
380–1w, 492–3

Chemical weapons
Indonesia 579w

Chernobyl
EC aid 375w
Nuclear accidents 375w
Nuclear power stations 343w

Chidgey, Mr David
Questions
Availability for work 446–8w
Building workers 450w
Civil servants, Repetitive strain injury 593w
Employment schemes, Young people 653–4w
International Labour Organisation 655–6w
Jobseeker's allowance, Students 656w
Motorways 41–2w
Motorways, Noise control 42–3w

Child abuse
626w
Teachers 8–9w

Children
Evidence 129–30w, 525w
Lead poisoning 43w
Local government services 188w
Maintenance 117–8w, 422w, 492w
Nutrition and health 311–2, 565w
Road accidents 329–30w

Children Act 1989
Questions
188w, 626w

Children in care
625w

China
Dechen, Joseph Jin 287w
Family planning 303–4w, 503–4w
Trade missions 572w
Weapons 9

Chinley School Derbyshire
519w

Chinook helicopters
Air accidents 597–8w

Chisholm, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 224–7, 233
Questions
Domestic energy conservation, Scotland 149w
Public utilities, Companies political contributions 784
Rape 642w
Rape, Scotland 672w
Sleeping rough, Scotland 151–2w
Young offenders, Death 127w, 153–4w, 362w

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
Questions
563w

Church Commissioners
Company accounts 556w
Oral questions 81w
Subsidiary companies 555–6w

Church of England
Pension funds 556–7w

Churchill, Mr Winston
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 806

Churchill, Winston LS
Archives 24w, 50–1w, 94w, 278–9w, 442w, 517w

Cinemas
Competition 239w
Monopoly 238–9w

Citizen's Charter
137w, 492
Compensation 593–4w
Enforcement 492

City of Westminster
Listed buildings 293w
Planning permission 293–4w, 540w
Property development 293–4w

City of Westminster Bill (HL) 1993/94
Debates etc.
Order for consideration read (08.06.95) 303, (15.06.95) 873

Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982
Questions
672–3w

Civil Court Procedures Review
608w

Civil disorder
Bradford 888

Civil proceedings
607w
Legal aid 606w

Civil Rights (Disabled Persons) Bill 1994/95
Questions
327

Civil servants
Repetitive strain injury 593w

Civil servants' secondment
Ferguslie Park Partnership 675–6w
Manufacturing industries 64w

Civil service
Codes of practice 380w
Recruitment 138w, 213w, 255–6w

***Civil service**—continued*
Scotland 213w
Wales 255–6w

Civil service agencies
Northern Ireland Dept of Health and Social Services 362–3w

Civil Service College
380w

Civil service manpower
Antrim 16–7w
Belfast 467w
Cookstown 349–50w
Dept of Transport 47w
Dungannon 349–52w
Fermanagh 347–8w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 317–21w
Northern Ireland Office 15w
Omagh 347–50w

Civil service recruitment
Northern Ireland 354–6w

Civil service redundancies
Dept of Employment 95w
Dept of Transport 47w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 317–9w

Clapham, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 936–8
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Costs 312w
Hard core unemployed, Barnsley 586–7

Clappison, Mr James
Questions
Business questions 328
Civil Court Procedures Review 608w
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Performance standards 615w
Inflation 878–9
Night flying 328w
Organic farming 311w
School Improvement Advisory Group, Public appointments 638–9w
Traffic areas, Efficiency scrutinies 615w

Clark, Dr David
Questions
Antitank missiles 596w
Armed forces casualties, Compensation 192w, 598w
Armed forces casualties, Hospitals 338w
Ballistic missile defence 364w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 3
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 337–8w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Peace keeping operations 337w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rapid deployment forces 337–8w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, USA 337w
Chinook helicopters, Air accidents 598w
Defence industries 363w
Defence procurement, Fraud 5
European fighter aircraft 596w
Medium extended air defence system 596w
Nimrod aircraft 363w
Patriot missile system 596w
Trident submarines 363w
Trident submarines, Sonar 364w

Clarke, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Coal mine closures (07.06.95) 155–7, 163

***Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth**, Chancellor of the Exchequer*
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Treasury 516–7w
Bank of England 630w
EC Finance Council 203–4w, 874–5
EC internal trade 875
Economic and monetary union 630–1w, 875, 885
Economic policy 517w, 885
Inflation 630w, 875–80

***Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth**—continued*
Interest rates 883–4
Public sector borrowing 884–5

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Remploy (14.06.95) 714, 723–6
Questions
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 563w
Local government social services 562w
Local government social services, Northern Ireland 542–8w
Local government social services, Scotland 590–2w
Local government social services, Wales 570–2w

Clelland, Mr David
Debates etc.
Remploy (14.06.95) 717–8
Questions
Defence industries, Helicopters 62w
Helicopters, Defence procurement 139w

Clifton-Brown, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 602
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 906
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 409
Questions
Armed forces housing 10
Armed forces officers, Official residences 363w
Electricity supply industry 423
Hard core unemployed 586
Local authorities, Contracts for services 251–3w
RAF Rissington 193w

Closed circuit television
Crime prevention 482w

Clwyd
Grant maintained schools 78w

Clwyd, Ann
Questions
Arms trade, Indonesia 779
Chemical weapons, Indonesia 579w
Cosmetic surgery 361–2w
East Timor, Diplomatic service 27w
Electric shock equipment 603w
Hospitals, Aberdare 485
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 420w
Indonesia, Aid financed trade 56–9w, 504–6w, 568–9w, 633–4w
Indonesia, Forestry 567–8w, 634w
Indonesia, Ministers' visits abroad 55w
Indonesia, Navigational aids 381w
Indonesia, Overseas loans 55–6w, 381w
Indonesia, Police training 57w, 600w
Indonesia, Power stations 567w
Indonesia, Radio 566–8w
Non-governmental organisations, Overseas aid 568w
Riot control weapons 121w

Clyde submarine base
366w

Coal mine closures
Government assistance 442w
House purchase (07.06.95) 150–69

Coal mining
Derelict land 453w

Coastal erosion
564w
Wales 569–70w

Coe, Mr Sebastian
Questions
Legal Services Ombudsman 439w
Treasury Solicitor's Dept, Cash limits 185w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 802
Questions
Currency devaluation 628w
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Disclosure of information 39–40w
Electronic Data Systems 395w
European Police Office 122w
Greenpeace, AWE Aldermaston 144w
National insurance, Disclosure of information 196w
National insurance, Personal injury compensation 351w
NHS numbers, Northern Ireland 351w
Overseas trade 575w
Police national computer 183–5w
Police national computer, Scotland 152w
Police records 121–2w
Prisoners, HIV infection 129w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police national computer 352w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 851, 854
Questions
Alternative energy 576w
Economic growth, Rural areas 575w
Gibraltar, Frontiers 204
Jobshare scheme 590
Rural areas, Wales 480–1

Commission of the European Communities
see European Commission

Committee on Standards in Public Life
493–4
NHS 187w

Commodity prices
245–6w

Common agricultural policy
307–9
Costs 312w
Fraud 312–3

Common fisheries policy
211w, 314–5, 374w, (14.06.95) 862

Community businesses
246w

Community care
Local government expenditure 429w

Community care plans
31w

Community health councils
332w
Great Yarmouth 360w

Community hospitals
Ayrshire 469–70w

Community nurses
Schizophrenia 335w

Companies
Audit 246w
Loans 85w

Companies Act 1985
Questions
60w

Companies political contributions
Public utilities 784–5

Company accounts
60w
Church Commissioners 556w

Company liquidations
Billing 790

Company taxation
393w

Competition
Cinemas 239w
Electricity supply industry 573w
Local government services 75w, 154w, 168–9w

Competition law
786–7

Complaints against central government
Dept of Employment 100w
Dept of National Heritage 201–2w
Dept of the Environment 107w
Dept of Trade and Industry 62w
Dept of Transport 43–4w
Ministry of Defence 146–7w
Northern Ireland Office 550–2w
Treasury 86w
Welsh Office 71w

Complaints against police
Disclosure of information 642w
Scotland 469–70w

Compliance cost assessments
452–3w

Compulsorily detained mental patients
Northern Ireland 635w

Computer applications
Motor vehicle registration 401w

Computer privacy
Taxation 395w

Computers in schools
Wales 406w

Conditions of employment
445w
Aircrew 531w
Health service staff 27w

Congdon, Mr David
Debates etc.
Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, Rep and 3R (12.06.95) 555–6
Questions
Accident and emergency departments, Hospital admissions 424w
Economic situation 788–9
Grant maintained schools, Inspections 292–3w
Home Office, Cash limits 179–80w
Hospitals, Croydon 560w
Small businesses 874

Connarty, Mr Michael
Questions
Primary education, Scotland 213w
Prison population, Scotland 671w
Prisoners, Scotland 667–70w
Prisoners, Suicide 589w
School closures, Scotland 273w
Young offenders, Scotland 666–7w
Zetland School 212–3w

Conservative Party
17–8

Constitutions
Kenya 220–1w

Construction costs
Sizewell B 793

Construction materials
Asbestos 114w

Consultants
Dept of the Environment 105–6w
Dept of Transport 48w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 312–3w
Ministry of Defence 366w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards 461w
Northern Ireland Office 16w
Treasury 83w
Welsh Office 68w

Consumer credit
395w

Consumer protection
Public utilities 575–6w

Consumers in the European Community Group
603–4w

Contingency reserve
Overseas Development Administration 54–5w

Contracts
Building industry 404w
Fergushe Community Business Securities 676w

Contracts for services
495–6
Dept of Employment 96–7w
Insolvency Service 369–70w
Local authorities 251–3w
Local government services 112–3w, 299–300w, 491–2w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 313–7w
Ministry of Defence 147w
NHS 360w, 496
NHS trusts 429–30w, 625w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards 299w, 301w
Northern Ireland Office 14–5w
Official receiver 343w, 369w
Pension funds 496
Prescription Pricing Authority 664w
RAF Valley 479–80
Treasury 85w
Vocational guidance 102w
Wales 491–2w

Contracts of employment
Temporary employment 447w

Contributions Agency
see Social Security Contributions Agency

Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
479w

Convictions
Motor insurance 642–3w

Cook, Mr Robin
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 201
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 197

Cookstown
Civil service manpower 349–50w

Coombs, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 922–4
Cyprus (14.06.95) 742–3
Housing market (13.06.95) 678–82
Questions
Engineering industries, Industrial production 792
European Commission 17

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
River Severn, Bridges 406w
Set-aside schemes, Access to countryside 310w

Cooperatives
Government grants 247w
Local enterprise agencies 247w

Coordination and Presentation of Government Policy Ministerial Committee
137w, 496–8

Copyright
EC law 368w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Questions
Association of Chief Police Officers, Immobilisation of vehicles 133–4w
Housing market 882

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 505–6
Questions
Dept of Social Security, Expenditure 646–7w
Export credit, Indonesia 239w
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 310

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy—continued
Government buildings 137w
IRA, Prisoners 133w
Overseas trade, Indonesia 778–9
Trident missiles 141w

Cormack, Sir Patrick
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 3, 199

Corporal punishment
Crimes of violence (06.06.95) 30–4

Corporal Punishment (Reintroduction) Bill 1994/95
Debates etc.
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (06.06.95) 30–4

Corston, Ms Jean
Debates etc.
Bristol Cancer Help Centre (14.06.95) 751–5
Questions
Bank of England 396w
Disabled workers, Employment opportunities 105w
Education, World Summit for Social Development 8w
Educational standards, World Summit for Social Development 8w
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Central Statistical Office 92w
Poverty 538w
Road accidents, Pedestrians 39w
World Summit for Social Development 493w

Cosmetic surgery
361–2w

Cosmetics
Animal experiments 605w

Cost per student
Teacher training 416w

Council for Catholic Maintained Schools
635w

Council house rents
608w

Council of Europe
95–6w

Council of Ministers
193–4, 223–6w

Council tax
North West region 91–2w

Council tax capping
385w

Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(15.06.95) 904–52

Council tenants
Rent rebates 249w

Councillors
Local government maladministration 75w, 167–8w

Councillors' allowances
Wales 486

Councillors' attendance allowances
Mid Glamorgan 319–20

Counselling
Cancer 559–60w

Countryside
Environment protection 488w

Countryside Council for Wales
661–2w
Finance 409w

Countryside stewardship scheme
Wales 660–1w

Courage Brewery
Scottish and Newcastle Breweries 65w

Court rules and procedures
Crime victims 271–2w

Court Service Agency
607w

Courts
Seating 271–2w

Courts' Charter
Magistrates' courts 607w

Cousins, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 600
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 911, 933–4
James, Gerald, Points of order (14.06.95) 795
Remploy (14.06.95) 720–3
Questions
Competition law 786
Legal aid, Recovery of costs 441w
Matrix Churchill, Legal costs 394w

Cowden
Railway accidents 328–9w

Cox, Mr Tom
Debates etc.
Cyprus (14.06.95) 733–5, 739
Questions
Bangladesh, Overseas aid 302w
Cyprus 284–5w
Gibraltar 344w
Overseas trade, Bangladesh 240w
Trade missions, Bangladesh 240w

Crash helmets
Cycling 474w

Credit unions
265–6w

Crime
Family practitioner services 188w
Greater London 134w

Crime prevention
Closed circuit television 482w

Crime victims
Court rules and procedures 271–2w

Crimes of violence
Corporal punishment (06.06.95) 30–4
Prisoners 644w

Criminal Injuries Compensation Bill 1994/95
Questions
891–902

Criminal investigation
"Tomorrows Job" 136w, 480–1w

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994
Questions
135–6w

Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1994/95
Debates etc.
Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 215–94

Croatia
Recognition of states 477–9w

Crofters Commission
Operating costs 272–3w

Crofting
Scotland 170w
Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Dept 273w

Crofting counties agricultural grants scheme
Scotland 273w

Crops
Genetically modified organisms 609–10w, 649w

Crown Agents Bill (HL) 1994/95
Debates etc.
2R and Money res* (06.06.95) 35–117

Crown immunity
Attorney General 641w
Dept of Social Security 646w

Crown immunity—continued
Dept of Transport 617w
Ministry of Defence 596–7w
Welsh Office 663–4w

Croxteth
Primary education 638w

Croydon
Hospitals 560w

Cumbria
GP fundholders 428w
Unemployment 588

Cummings, Mr John
Questions
Dept of Trade and Industry, Billing 789–90

Cunningham, Mr Jim
Questions
Archaeological sites 52w
Army, EC countries 11
BBC 53w
Conditions of employment 445w
Council of Europe 95–6w
Housing benefits, Students 644w
Insolvency practitioners 370–1w
Insolvency Service, Contracts for services 369–70w
Low incomes 386w
Official receiver, Contracts for services 369w
Student grants 483–4w
Student grants, Dependants 483w
Student grants, Social security benefits 483w
Student loans, Debt collection 483w
Television, Television programmes 53w
Theatres 52w
Theatres, Access to buildings 201w
Training and enterprise councils, Appeals 539w
West Midlands, Regional arts boards 51–2w

Cunningham, Rt Hon Dr John
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 597–9
Questions
British Gas, Productivity 785
British Manufacturing and Research Company 788
Northumbrian Water, Group Lyonnaise des Eaux 240w

Cunningham, Roseanna
Debates etc.
Oath and affirmation, Cunningham, Roseanna (06.06.95) 28

Currency devaluation
628w

Curry, Mr David, Minister of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 915–6, 946–8
Housing market (13.06.95) 688–93
Questions
Council house rents 608w
Housing subsidies 249w
Local government reform 486w
Local government reform, South Hams 611w
Regional planning and development, South East region 489w
Single regeneration budget 613w
"Survey of Derelict Land in England 1993" 327–8w

Customs and Excise
Newcastle upon Tyne 85–6w
Unfair dismissal 394w

Cycling
(07.06.95) 127–49, 402–3w
Crash helmets 474w

Cyprus
284–5w, (14.06.95) 729–50

Cyprus—continued
Politics and government 203

Dafis, Mr Cynog
Questions
Agricultural land 661–2w
Coastal erosion 564w
Coastal erosion, Wales 569–70w
Countryside stewardship scheme, Wales 660–1w
Environment protection, Wales 661w
Grant maintained schools, School population 410w
Grasslands, Wales 661w
Hospitals, Wales 485
National Lottery 279w
Special areas of conservation, Wales 660w
Town and country planning, Wales 490w
Welsh language 659w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc.
BBC Scotland, Points of order (12.06.95) 499
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 603–4
Questions
Brent Spar 274w
Cameroon, Overseas aid 509w
Darwin initiative 486w
Flowers, Imports 434w
Forth rail bridge 473w
Gulf War syndrome 146w
Intellectual property, Educational aid 453w
Madagascar, Overseas aid 509w
Malaysia, Forest products 634w
Nature conservation 488w
Overseas aid, Plant power 506–7w
Science and technology 432w
St Helena, Overseas aid 507–8w
Systematic biology 431–2w
Systematic biology, Research finance 432w
UN Convention on Biological Diversity 486–7w

Darling, Mr Alistair
Debates etc.
Members' conduct, Points of order (15.06.95) 903
Questions
Inflation 880

Darlington
Bus services 45w

Dartmouth royal regatta
Warships 192–3w, 438–9w

Darwin initiative
486w

Davidson, Mr Ian
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 288–90
Questions
Belize, Armed forces deployment 193

Davies, Mr Quentin
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 3
Children, Local government services 188w
Children Act 1989 188w
Dept for Education, Cash limits 205w
Public utilities, Privatisation 781

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
Councillors, Local government maladministration 75w
Direct labour departments, Finance 73–5w
Direct labour departments, Redundancy 74w
Health service staff, Expenditure 254w
"Lifestyles in Rural Wales" 77w
Local government reform, Wales 413w, 489w
Local government services, Competition 75w
Public expenditure, Wales 483–4
RAF Valley, Contracts for services 479–80
Welsh Assembly 662–3w

Davis, Mr David, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between EC and Russian Federation and Ukraine) Orders (08.06.95) 355–8, 372–5
Questions
Arms exports 220w
Belize 193
Belize, Armed forces deployment 193
Brazil, Military attaches 284w
Council of Ministers 193–4, 223–6w
Cyprus 284–5w
EC Committee of the Regions, Public appointments 600–1w
EC defence policy 206
EC Foreign Affairs Council 226–7w
Economic and monetary union 206–7
European Parliament 201–2
Gibraltar 344w
Indonesia, Police training 600w
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 194, 201–3, 205–6, 218–9w, 287–9w, 554–5w
Iran, Nuclear materials 374w
NATO 219w
North Korea, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 374–5w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 219w
Nuclear weapons 220w
Treaty on European Union 554–5w
Turkey, Religious freedom 376–7w
Western European Union 219w

Day, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Cyprus (14.06.95) 735, 741, 744

Death
Young offenders 127w, 153–4w, 362w

Debt collection
Student loans 483w

Debts
Developing countries 59w, 261w
Railtrack 81–2w

Dechen, Joseph Jin
China 287w

Defective housing
Demolition 487w
Public sector housing 384–5w

Defence Animal Centre
Performance standards 534w

Defence contracts
Parachuting 140w

Defence costs study
7, 366w

Defence equipment
139w, 192w

Defence industries
140w, 363w
Diversification 63w
Helicopters 62w
North West region 148–9w

Defence land
Land acquisition 537w

Defence Postal and Courier Services
Performance standards 534w

Defence procurement
Fraud 4–5
Helicopters 139w, 535w

Defence research
Armed forces 365w
USA 297–8w

Defence Research Agency
336–7w

Democracy
Nigeria 601w

Demolition
Defective housing 487w

Denham, Mr John
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 623, 663–9
Questions
Axle weights 276w
Free school meals 9w
Lorries, Road damage 403–4w
Members' staff, Personal pensions 359w
Motor vehicle testing, Hampshire 276w
Pre-school education 9w
World Bank 190–1w

Dental charges
36w, 187w

Dental health
Northern Ireland 464–5w
Scotland 214w
Wales 405w
Young people 558w

Dental services
330–1w
Expenditure 215w
Mercury 32w, 305–6w
Northern Ireland 356w
Scotland 215w
Wales 404–6w

Departmental correspondence
34w
Dept for Education 11w
Dept of National Heritage 197–8w
Dept of the Environment 106w
Dept of Trade and Industry 243–5w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 1w
Ministry of Defence 148w

Departmental forms
Integrated Administration and Control System 80w

Departmental publications
290–1w

Dependants
Student grants 483w

Deprivation indicators
Family doctors 410–3w

Dept for Education
Cash limits 205w
Departmental correspondence 11w
Land acquisition 7w
Maternity leave 290w
Motor vehicles 520w
Parliamentary questions 639w
Paternity leave 290w

Dept of Employment
Cash limits 209–10w
Civil service redundancies 95w
Complaints against central government 100w
Contracts for services 96–7w
Maternity leave 283w
Paternity leave 283w
Performance standards 98w

Dept of Health
Land acquisition 35w, 559–61w
Maternity leave 309w
Parliamentary questions 562w
Paternity leave 309w

Dept of National Heritage
Cash limits 200w
Complaints against central government 201–2w
Departmental correspondence 197–8w
Early retirement 197w, 202w
Land acquisition 51w
Maternity leave 278w
Paternity leave 278w

Dept of Social Security
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 647w
Cellular phones 118w
Crown immunity 646w
Expenditure 646–7w
Maternity leave 270w
Parliamentary questions 538w
Paternity leave 270w

Dept of the Environment
Cash limits 250–1w
Complaints against central government 107w
Consultants 105–6w
Departmental correspondence 106w
Land acquisition 296w, 541–2w
Maternity leave 294w
Oral questions 108w
Parliamentary questions 541w, 611w
Paternity leave 294w

Dept of Trade and Industry
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 579–80w
Billing 789–90
Cash limits 238w
Complaints against central government 62w
Departmental correspondence 243–5w
Land acquisition 62w
Maternity leave 268w
MINIS 368w
Paternity leave 268w
Public expenditure 788

Dept of Transport
Building industry 404w
Cash limits 227–8w
Civil service manpower 47w
Civil service redundancies 47w
Complaints against central government 43–4w
Consultants 48w
Crown immunity 617w
Early retirement 235–6w
Empty housing 49w
Land acquisition 37w
Maternity leave 275–6w
Parliamentary questions 617w
Paternity leave 275–6w
Performance standards 43–4w

Deregulation initiative
785–6
Manufacturing industries 785
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 511–2w

Derelict land
Bristol 453w
Coal mining 453w

Deserts
Overseas aid 59w, 504w, 566w

Deva, Mr Nirj Joseph
Debates etc.
South Asia (09.06.95) 471–3

Developing countries
Debts 59w, 261w

Devlin, Mr Tim
Questions
Ministry of Defence, Bath 297w
RNSD Eaglescliffe 297w
Trident 10–1

Devolution
591–2

Devonport Dockyard
8

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 612–22, 626, 628–9, 635

Dicks, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 26–7

Digital television
51w

Diplomatic service
208–9
East Timor 27w
Trade promotion 197, 208, 455w

Dir76/768/EEC
605w

Dir85/337/EEC
237–8w

Dir91/321/EEC
565–6w

Dir93/98/EEC
368w

Dir94/22/EC
236–7w

Direct labour departments
Finance 73–5w, 155–68w
Financial targets 112–3w
Redundancy 74w, 166w, 169w
Scotland 155–69w
Wales 73–5w

Director General of Gas Supply
see Office of Gas Supply

Directors
Welsh Health Common Services Authority 490w

Disability living allowance
Social security appeals 419w

Disabled workers
Employment opportunities 105w
Engineering industries 539w
Epilepsy 386w
Royal Ulster Constabulary (06.06.95) 119–26

Disciplinary proceedings
Hospital consultants 361w
Police 126–7w
West Midlands Police 126–7w

Disease control
Prisons 129w

Divers
Police 258w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 914–20, 946
Housing market (13.06.95) 643–4, 647, 683–8

Dockyards
Privatisation 8–9

Doctors
Performance standards (12.06.95) 548–58

Doctors' list of patients
29w, 76w
Scotland 150w

Dogs
Export of live animals 377–8w

Domestic energy conservation
Scotland 149w

Donohoe, Mr Brian H
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 656–8
Questions
Ardrossan bypass 212w
Cellular phones, Dept of Social Security 118w
NHS, Private investment 367–8w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 275w, 368w

Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen, Secretary of State for National Heritage
Debates etc.
Film industry, Ministerial statements (06.06.95) 19–28
Questions
Archaeological sites 52w
Art works 372w
Art works, Insurance 200–1w
BBC 53w
BBC, Independent producers 200w
Brodsworth Hall 606w
Cable television, Thurrock 278w
Channel Three 53w
Channel Four 52–3w
Channel Four, Finance 371w
Churchill, Winston LS, Archives 50–1w, 278–9w, 442w, 517w

Dorrell, Rt Hon Stephen—continued
Complaints against central government, Dept of National Heritage 201–2w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of National Heritage 197–8w
Dept of National Heritage, Cash limits 200w
Digital television 51w
Early retirement, Dept of National Heritage 197w, 202w
Employment opportunities, Ealing 442w
English Heritage, Urban development corporations 517–8w
Land acquisition, Dept of National Heritage 51w
Listed buildings, Yorkshire and Humberside 605–6w
Local broadcasting, Cable television 53w
Maternity leave, Dept of National Heritage 278w
Museums and galleries, Admission charges 199–200w
National Lottery 198–9w, 279w, 372w
National Lottery, Voluntary organisations 53–4w
Royal residences, Art works 202w
Royal William Dockyard Plymouth, Listed buildings 518–9w
Television, Television programmes 53w
Theatres 52w
Theatres, Access to buildings 201w
Theatres, Arts Council grants 371w
Tourism, Italy 67w
West Midlands, Regional arts boards 51–2w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 216, 235–7, 242, 248–50, 255–63, 266–7, 271–85, 288, 293–4
Questions
A1 Steering Group 589w
A76, Road accidents 582–5w
A76, Road traffic 665–6w
Aids for handicapped, Scotland 589w
Ardrossan bypass 212w
Asthma, Scotland 150–1w
Cancer, Argyle and Clyde Health Board 586–8w
Charities, Bank services 275w
Community hospitals, Ayrshire 469–70w
Complaints against police, Scotland 469–70w
Dental health, Scotland 214w
Dental services, Expenditure 215w
Doctors' list of patients, Scotland 150w
Domestic energy conservation, Scotland 149w
Dounreay 472w
Drug abuse, Scotland 679w
Ferguslie Community Business Securities, Contracts 676w
Ferguslie Park Partnership, Civil servants' secondment 675–6w
Fertility, Medical treatments 367w
Fine defaulters, Scotland 216w
Gateside School Paisley 675w
Gecas, Antonas, Nazi war crimes 665w
Gilmour, Raymond, Prerogative of mercy 675w
GP fundholders, Legal opinion 665w
GP fundholders, Scotland 591–2w
Heart diseases, Scotland 274w
Hospices, National Lottery 677w
Housing associations, Scotland 165w
Industrial accidents, Scotland 471w
Johnstone bypass, Road accidents 674w
Kintore bypass 367w
Local government social services, Scotland 590–2w
Medical malpractice, Scotland 682w
Miscarriages of justice, Scotland 670–2w
NHS, Private investment 367–8w
NHS trusts, Scotland 674–5w
Nurses, Scotland 470w
Nutrition and health, Scotland 153w
Personal social services, Scotland 591w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James—continued
Police, Protective clothing 472w
Police national computer, Scotland 152w
Primary education, Scotland 213w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 471–2w
Prison population, Scotland 671w
Prisoners, HIV infection 169–70w
Prisoners, Scotland 667–70w
Prisoners, Suicide 589w
Procurators fiscal 171w
Rape, Scotland 672w
Residential care, Elderly 366–7w
School closures, Scotland 273w
School meals, Scotland 590w
Schools, Charities 215w
Scottish courts 672w
Scottish Homes 172w, 674w
Scottish Homes, Tenants 272w
Scottish Office, Public appointments 675w
Security industry, Scotland 677–8w
Sleeping rough, Scotland 151–2w
Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority 149–50w
Tourism, Wild animals 213w
Training, Ayrshire 215w
Wigtown Housing Association 169w
Young offenders, Death 153–4w
Young offenders, Scotland 666–7w
Zetland School 212–3w

Dounreay
472w

Dover, Mr Den
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 614
Questions
Executives, Pay 787–8

Dowd, Mr Jim
Questions
Business questions 901
South Thames Training and Enterprise Council 444w

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
Disclosure of information 39–40w
Performance standards 615w

Driving licences
Epilepsy 329w

Driving offences
474–5w

Drug abuse
(09.06.95) 397–470
Holloway Prison 122w
Scotland 679w
Wales 68w

Drug crimes
Nigeria 124w
Prisoners 181w
Women's prisons 174–6w

Drugs
NHS 188–9w

Duchy of Lancaster
137w
Intestacy 258–9w

Dumbartonshire Enterprise
273w

Duncan, Mr Alan
Questions
Business questions 329
Contracts for services 495–6
Defence Animal Centre, Performance standards 534w
International Labour Organisation 94–5w
VAT 627w

Duncan Smith, Mr Iain
Debates etc.
House of Commons procedure, Points of order (12.06.95) 559
Housing market (13.06.95) 647, 669–73
Questions
Business questions 898
Civil Service College 380w
Direct labour departments, Financial targets 112–3w

Dungannon
Civil service manpower 349–52w

Dunn, Mr Bob
Questions
Business questions 324
Defective housing, Public sector housing 384–5w
Inflation 877

Dunnachie, Mr Jimmy
Questions
Middle East, Peace negotiations 218w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Questions
Business questions 324
Driving offences 474–5w
Freight transport 329w
Lorry drivers, Working hours 401w
Railway industry 783
Road safety 329w

Dyfed
Training for work 583

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Questions
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 196
Trade missions, China 572w

Eagle, Ms Angela
Questions
Armed forces discharges, Pregnant women 5–6
Business questions 326
Executives, Pay 788
Public expenditure 884
Thatcher, RtHonBaroness 593

Ealing
Employment opportunities 442w

Early retirement
Ambulance services 355w
Dept of National Heritage 197w, 202w
Dept of Transport 235–6w
Farmers 566w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 26w
Further education teachers 416w
Home Office 129–31w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 321–4w
Northern Ireland 355w
Police 127w, 526–7w
Teachers 8w, 76w
Treasury 632w
Welsh Office 255w
West Midlands Police 126–7w

East Midlands
Export promotion 779–80
Temporary employment 442w

East Timor
191w
Diplomatic service 27w

Eastern Europe
EC aid 304–5w
EC external relations (07.06.95) 294
Overseas investment 376w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Questions
Rwanda, Armed conflict 220w

EC action
Pesticides 378w
Price labelling (12.06.95) 559

EC Agriculture Council
3w

EC aid
ACP countries 499–500w
Chernobyl 375w
Eastern Europe 304–5w
Southern Africa Development Community 496–7w

EC Committee of the Regions
Public appointments 600–1w

EC Cons Doc 8693/94
(07.06.95) 294

EC Cons Doc 8943/94
(07.06.95) 294

EC Cons Doc 5928/95
(07.06.95) 294

EC countries
Army 11
Economic situation 339–40w
Social security finance 421w
Unemployment 584–5

EC defence policy
11–2, 206

EC Development Council
191w

EC Draft 4069/95
(12.06.95) 559

EC economic policy
(15.06.95) 952

EC Energy Council
64–5w

EC external relations
Central Europe (07.06.95) 294
Eastern Europe (07.06.95) 294
Russia (08.06.95) 355–75
Ukraine (08.06.95) 355–75

EC Finance Council
203–4w, 874–5

EC Foreign Affairs Council
226–7w

EC grants and loans
Merseyside 613w
Privately owned mines 604w
Urban areas 665w
Wales 665w
Welsh Development Agency 289–90w, 663w

EC Health Council
187–8w

EC internal trade
875

EC law
Copyright 368w
Fire regulations 481w
Food hygiene 648–9w
Infant foods 565–6w
Motorcycles (13.06.95) 699–706
Petroleum exploration licences 236–7w
Transport of animals 211w

EC Social Charter
581–3, 585
Hotel and catering industry 443w

ECOFIN
see EC Finance Council

Economic and monetary union
206–7, 316, 591, 627w, 629–31w, 875, 885

Economic forecasting
432–3w

Economic growth
Rural areas 575w
Unemployment 881–2

Economic policy
517w, 885

Economic situation
788–9
EC countries 339–40w
Group of Seven 339–40w
Wales 489

Economic surveys
Northern Ireland 356w

Edgware Hospital
561w

Education
World Summit for Social Development 8w
Young people 210w

Education and industry
University teachers 484w

Education (Fees and Awards) (Amendment) Regulations 1995
Debates etc.
(13.06.95) 606

Education (Fees and Awards) (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 1995
Debates etc.
(07.06.95) 211

Education vouchers
Pre-school education 9w, 484w, 519–20w

Educational admission
Further education colleges 353–4w

Educational aid
Intellectual property 453w

Educational assessment
10–1w
Supply teachers 10–1w

Educational standards
World Summit for Social Development 8w

Efficiency scrutinies
Traffic areas 615w

Eggar, Rt Hon Tim, Minister for Energy
Questions
Alternative energy 268–9w, 576w
Brent Spar 65w
Defence industries, Diversification 63w
Defence industries, Helicopters 62w
Defence industries, North West region 148–9w
EC Energy Council 64–5w
Electricity Act 1989, Planning inquiries 61w
Electricity supply industry, Competition 573w
Electricity tariffs 66w
Engineering Employers' Federation 241w
Foreign investment in UK 574–5w
Gas supply industry 573w
Gas supply industry, Licensing 66–7w, 368w
Heysham 2 Power Station 66w
Industrial investment 574w
Iron and steel industry 62–3w
Iron and steel industry, Recruitment 241w
Manufacturing industries, Civil servants' secondment 64w
Nuclear Electric, Privatisation 65w
Nuclear power, Privatisation 269w
Nuclear power, Public appointments 65–6w
Nuclear power stations, Chernobyl 343w
Nuclear power stations, Decommissioning 576w
Petroleum exploration, Falkland Islands 248w
Petroleum exploration licences, EC law 236–7w
Petroleum exploration licences, Environmental impact assessment 237–8w
Public utilities, Privatisation 780–1
Regional selective assistance 573–4w
Shipbuilding Intervention Fund 240–1w
UK companies abroad 576w

Elderly
Income tax 433w
Residential care 71–2w, 115w, 366–7w
Standard of living 25w
Wales 569w

Election expenditure
494
Parliamentary elections (13.06.95) 607–11

Elections
(12.06.95) 500

Electoral Reform Bill 1994/95
Debates etc.
1R (13.06.95) 607–11

Electric shock equipment
603w

Electricity Act 1989
Questions
Planning inquiries 61w

Electricity supply industry
419–23
Competition 573w

Electricity tariffs
66w

Electronic Data Systems
395w

Elletson, Mr Harold
Debates etc.
European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between EC and Russian Federation and Ukraine) Orders (08.06.95) 356, 379–82
Questions
Business questions 327, 897
Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Rank Organisation 239w

Emergency calls
331w
Ambulance services 31w

Emery, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
Aircrew, Conditions of employment 531w

Employees' contributions
421–2w, 494w

Employers' Associations
241w

Employers' contributions
421–2w, 494–5w
Employment opportunities 495w

Employers Organisations Bill 1994/95
Debates etc.
1R (14.06.95) 796–8

Employment
103–4w

Employment agencies
Northern Ireland 346w

Employment discrimination
Northern Ireland 353w
Older workers 443w

Employment level
98–9w, 654w

Employment opportunities
Disabled workers 105w
Ealing 442w
Employers' contributions 495w
Manufacturing industries 782–3
Motorcycle industry 783–4
Overseas aid 60w

Employment protection
585

Employment schemes
583–4, 650–2w
Yorkshire and Humberside 654w
Young people 653–4w

Employment Service Agency
444w

Empty housing
Armed forces housing 4, 9–10
Dept of Transport 49w
HMS Royal Arthur 436w

Energy conservation
Government departments 114w

Energy prices
VAT 392w

Engineering education
8w

Engineering Employers' Federation
241w

Engineering industries
Disabled workers 539w
Exports 394w
Industrial production 792

English Heritage
Urban development corporations 517–8w

Enright, Mr Derek
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 54–60, 64, 86, 110
Questions
Common agricultural policy 308
Economic and monetary union 629w
Rwanda, Armed conflict 194–5

Entry clearances
Adoption 377w
Overseas workers 479w

Environment Agency
609w

Environment Bill (HL) 1994/95
Questions
610w

Environment protection
Countryside 488w
Misleading advertising (15.06.95) 903
Northern Ireland 465w
Research 488w
Wales 661w

Environment Select Committee
(13.06.95) 698

Environmental Claims Bill 1994/95
Debates etc.
1R (15.06.95) 903

Environmental education
Scotland 274–5w

Environmental impact assessment
Genetically modified organisms 609–10w
Petroleum exploration licences 237–8w

Environmental policy
Scotland 274–5w

Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations
Questions
Shipbuilding 251w

Environmentally sensitive areas
Wales 68–70w

Epilepsy
423–4w
Disabled workers 386w
Driving licences 329w
Health education 415–6w
Prescription drugs 336w
Pupils 415w
Special education 484–5w

Equalities Associates
522w

Essex
590–1
School transport 14–5

Estatecare Group
Welsh Health Common Services Authority 490–1w, 663w

Ethnic groups
Sarajevo 477w

Ethnic minorities
Armed forces officers 364–5w

Ethnic monitoring
Police Staff College 523w
Pupils 416–7w

European Commission
17
Tobacco 2w

European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and the Russian Federation) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(08.06.95) 355–75

European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Communities and their Member States and Ukraine) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(08.06.95) 355–75

European Convention on Human Rights
Mental health community care 333w

European fighter aircraft
596w

European Parliament
201–2

European Police Office
122w

Evans, Mr David
Debates etc.
Shalfleet bridge (07.06.95) 296
Questions
Executives, Pay 787

Evans, Mr John
Questions
Unemployment, Statistics 580

***Evans, Mr Jonathan**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Corporate Affairs*
Questions
AST Training 579w
Cinemas, Monopoly 238–9w
Companies, Audit 246w
Company accounts 60w
Competition law 786–7
Compliance cost assessments 452–3w
Consumers in the European Community Group 603–4w
Cosmetics, Animal experiments 605w
Executives, Pay 454w, 787–8
Financial Services Act 1986, Prosecutions 239w
Fire Safety Enforcement Agencies Review 579w
Insolvency practitioners 370–1w
Insolvency Service 343–4w
Insolvency Service, Contracts for services 369–70w
Lloyd's of London 573w
Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Rank Organisation 239w
National Consumer Council, Finance 790–1
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 63w, 267w, 577w, 777–8, 794
Official receiver, Contracts for services 369w
Official receiver, Newcastle upon Tyne 343–4w
Price Marking Order 1991 238w
Public utilities, Companies political contributions 784–5
Public utilities, Consumer protection 575–6w
Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, Courage Brewery 65w
Water charges 603w

Evans, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 55, 57, 68, 72–6, 98, 100
Questions
Back to work bonus scheme 494w
Birds, Nature conservation 295–6w
Business questions 902
Councillors' attendance allowances, Mid Glamorgan 319–20
Devolution 591–2
Hospital patients, Wales 490
Special education, Lancashire 484w
Strikes 442w
Training, Young people 210w

***Evans, Mr Roger**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept for Social Security*
Questions
Back to work bonus scheme 494w
Family credit 420w
Habitual residence test 421–2w
Housing benefits 196w, 646w
Housing benefits, Rents 115–6w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 420w
Housing benefits, Students 644w

Evans, Mr Roger—continued
Income support, Burnley 270w
Income support, Social security benefits rules 117w
Income support, Young people 645–6w
Personal income, Social security benefits 420–1w
Residential care, Elderly 115w
Residential care, Income support 115w
Social security benefits, Mortgages 646w
Social security claims, Home visits 114–5w
Social security payments, Automation 116w

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Agricultural products 305–6
Employment schemes 583–4
Employment Service Agency 444w

Evidence
Children 129–30w, 525w

Exchange rates
396w, 627w

Excise duties
Petrol alternatives 93w, 399w

Executives
NHS 563w
Office of Gas Supply 529w
Pay 186w, 454w, 787–8
Scottish councils 678w

Exhaust emission controls
Parking 107w

Explosives
Waste disposal 377w

Export credit
605w
Indonesia 239w

Export licensing
Indonesia 239w

Export of live animals
513w
Air force bases 192w
Animal welfare 306–7, 310–1
Baginton Airport 212w
Dogs 377–8w
Greenham Common 145w
Ritual slaughter 512–3w
Treaty of Rome 513w
Wales 357w

Export promotion
East Midlands 779–80
Food exports 311–2w

Exports
242–6w, 267–8w, 781–2
Engineering industries 394w
Italy 241–2w
Meat 311w

Exservicemen
Nuclear weapons tests 434–6w

Eye tests
Optical charges 187w

Faber, Mr David
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 452–6
Questions
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 327w
Northern Ireland Dept of Health and Social Services, Civil service agencies 362–3w

Fabricant, Mr Michael
Debates etc.
Motorcycles (13.06.95) 699–702
Questions
Chartermark scheme 492–3
Competition law 786
Economic and monetary union 627w
Food consumption, Buy British 304
North American Free Trade Agreement 575w
Welsh language, Adult education 405w

Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989
Questions
353w

Falkland Islands
Petroleum exploration 248w

Family credit
420w

Family doctors
Accident and emergency departments 27–8w
Deprivation indicators 410–3w
Vacancies 361w
Wales 410–3w

Family planning
China 303–4w, 503–4w
Overseas aid 302–3w
Tibet 304w

Family practitioner services
Crime 188w
Locums (14.06.95) 863–72
Manpower 36w

Farmers
Early retirement 566w

Farms
Accidents 358w
Northern Ireland 463w
Wales 358w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Questions
Armed forces, Defence research 365w
Armed forces deployment, Property transfer 194w
Armed forces officers, Ethnic minorities 364–5w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Legal costs 373w
Defence land, Land acquisition 537w
Dept of the Environment, Land acquisition 541–2w
Dockyards, Privatisation 8–9
Habitual residence test 421–2w
Health authorities, Land acquisition 561w
Land acquisition, Dept for Education 7w
Land acquisition, Dept of Health 35w, 559–61w
Land acquisition, Dept of National Heritage 51w
Land acquisition, Dept of the Environment 296w
Land acquisition, Dept of Trade and Industry 62w
Land acquisition, Dept of Transport 37w
Land acquisition, Government departments 202w
Land acquisition, Ministry of Defence 145w
Property Services Agency, Privatisation 613–4w
RNAS Portland 194–5w, 364w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 602
Questions
Business questions 895
Manufacturing industries, West Midlands 792

Fenner, Dame Peggy
Questions
Channel Tunnel Safety Authority, Annual reports 399w

Ferguslie Community Business Securities
Contracts 676w

Ferguslie Park Partnership
Civil servants' secondment 675–6w

Fermanagh
Civil service manpower 347–8w

Ferries
Shipping safety 37–8w, 48w, 616w, 621–2w

Fertility
Medical treatments 367w

Fertility—continued
Scotland 367w

Field, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Shalfleet bridge (07.06.95) 295–300, 302
Questions
Average earnings, Isle of Wight 444w
Capital gains tax, Tax assessment 515w
Sailing boats, Shipping safety 532w
Trade unions, Industrial relations law 886–7

Field, Mr Frank
Debates etc.
Low incomes (07.06.95) 178–80
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 335–40, 343, 349
Questions
Church of England, Pension funds 556–7w
Employment schemes 650–2w
Family credit 420w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 420w
Income tax 82w
Job release scheme 653w
Jobclubs 389–90w
Jobplan workshops 387–90w
National insurance, Personal records 116–7w
Oil revenues 204w
Personal income, Social security benefits 420–1w
Privatisation, Income 266w
Restart programme 386–8w
Social security finance 493–4w
Tax allowances, Income tax 205–6w
Taxpayers, South East region 266–7w
Technical and vocational education initiative 445–6w
Temporary employment 652–3w
Vocational education, Student wastage 445w

Film industry
Ministerial statements (06.06.95) 19–28

Finance Act 1994
Questions
622w

Financial institutions
Wealth 262w

Financial Services Act 1986
Questions
Prosecutions 239w

Financial Services Act 1986 (Investment Advertisements) (Exemptions) (No 2) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(14.06.95) 862

Financial targets
Direct labour departments 112–3w

Fine defaulters
173w
Scotland 216w, 667–70w

Fire regulations
EC law 481w

Fire Safety Enforcement Agencies Review
579w

Fire services
Gwent 486
North Yorkshire (14.06.95) 759–66
Palace of Westminster 328w
Wales 341w, 486

Firearms
522w

First aid
Air transport 40w

First offenders
West Yorkshire 480w

Fiscal policy
877–8
Northern Ireland 878

Fish conservation
310w

Fisher, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Coal mine closures (07.06.95) 153–5, 164

Fisheries
309w
North Sea 274w
Spain 6w

Fishery protection
Spain 513–4w

Fishing quotas
648w
Republic of Ireland 379w

Fishing vessels
48–9w
Shipping registration 236w

Fixed penalties
Belfast 210–1w

Flowers
Imports 434w

Fluoridation
563w

Flynn, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Electoral Reform Bill, 1R (13.06.95) 607–8
Questions
Assisted places scheme 7–8w
Catamarans, Passengers 616w
Church Commissioners, Oral questions 81w
Dept of the Environment, Oral questions 108w
Ferries, Shipping safety 37–8w, 48w, 616w, 621–2w
House of Commons debates, Translation services 23w
Income tax, Elderly 433w
International Atomic Energy Agency 222w
Medium extended air defence system 144w
Mentally disturbed offenders 341–2w
Motor vehicle safety 329w
Pre-school education, Wales 488
Set-aside schemes 310w
Trident missiles 144w
UK companies abroad 576w

Food consumption
Buy British 303–4

Food exports
Export promotion 311–2w

Food hygiene
EC law 648–9w

Food inspection
Meat 590w
Scotland 590w

Food labelling
511w, 566w
Genetically modified organisms 511w

Food stocks
1w

Football
Public order policing (08.06.95) 376–96

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 377w, 555w, 599–600w
Early retirement 26w
Maternity leave 287w
Parliamentary questions 599w
Paternity leave 287w

Foreign investment in UK
574–5w
Northern Ireland 17–21w
Wales 490–1

Foreign relations
Morocco 207–8
Rwanda 220w
Yugoslavia 207

Forensic science
AIDS 425–6w, 481w

Forest products
Malaysia 634w

Forestry
Indonesia 567–8w, 634w

Forestry Commission
472w
Blood sports 467w

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 40, 45, 49, 53–4, 105–6
Questions
Inflation 880
One stop shop initiative 789

Former ministers
Archives 25w

Former Prime Ministers
Pay 601–2w

Forsyth, Rt Hon Michael, Minister of State, Home Office
Questions
European Police Office 122w
Holloway Prison 123–5w
Holloway Prison, Drug abuse 122w
Licensed premises 121w
Mentally disturbed offenders 120–1w, 341–2w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Habitual offenders 177w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Prisoners' outings 175–7w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Special hospitals 118–9w
Police records 121–2w
Prison escapes 181–2w
Prison overcrowding 177w, 526w
Prison overcrowding, Performance standards 644w
Prison population 178w
Prison staff, Suicide 119–20w
Prisoners, AIDS 645w
Prisoners, Crimes of violence 644w
Prisoners, Drug crimes 181w
Prisoners, HIV infection 129w, 525–6w
Prisoners, Radio programmes 280w
Prisoners, Women 123–4w
Prisoners' home leave, Holloway Prison 279–80w
Prisoners' on remand 128w
Sudbury Prison, Prison escapes 182–3w
Television licences, Prison sentences 643w
Women's prisons, Drug crimes 174–6w
Women's prisons, Prison overcrowding 174w
Women's prisons, Prison sentences 176w
Women's prisons, Self-mutilation 174w
Young offenders, Death 127w

Forsythe, Mr Clifford
Questions
Public service, Offices 16–7w

Forth, Mr Eric, Minister of State, Dept for Education
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 446, 449–50, 466–70
Stratford School (14.06.95) 771–6
Questions
Education, World Summit for Social Development 8w
Educational assessment 10–1w
Educational assessment, Supply teachers 10–1w
Educational standards, World Summit for Social Development 8w
General certificate of secondary education, Languages education 637–8w
Government grants 11w
Grant maintained schools, Inspections 292–3w
Health education, Epilepsy 415–6w
Mathematics education 12w
Pre-school education 9w
Pre-school education, Education vouchers 484w, 519–20w
Pre-school education, School population 521w
Pupils, Epilepsy 415w

Forth, Mr Eric—continued
Pupils, Ethnic monitoring 416–7w
School Improvement Advisory Group, Public appointments 638–9w
Special education, Epilepsy 484–5w
Special education, Lancashire 484w
Teachers, Child abuse 8–9w
Technology colleges, Charities 520w

Forth rail bridge
473w

Forward look
574w

Foster care
36w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc.
BBC Scotland, Points of order (12.06.95) 500
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 40–1, 43–4, 53, 56, 66, 80–1, 94–106, 108–9, 112–3
Questions
A76, Road accidents 582–5w
A76, Road traffic 665–6w
Armed forces training, Mines 437w
Arms exports 220w
Community hospitals, Ayrshire 469–70w
Complaints against police, Scotland 469–70w
Crown immunity, Attorney General 641w
Crown immunity, Dept of Social Security 646w
Crown immunity, Dept of Transport 617w
Crown immunity, Ministry of Defence 596–7w
Crown immunity, Welsh Office 663–4w
Debts, Developing countries 261w
Gecas, Antonas, Nazi war crimes 665w
Housing associations, Scotland 165w
Interest rates 883–4
Military exercises 437–8w
Military exercises, Navy 437w
Nurses, Scotland 470w
Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority 149–50w
Wigtown Housing Association 169w

Fowler, Rt Hon Sir Norman
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 635–8

Foxley, Gordon
5

Franchising
Post offices 456w

Fraser, Mr John
Questions
Noise control 109w

Fraud
Common agricultural policy 312–3
Defence procurement 4–5
Legal aid 519w

Free school meals
9w, 291–2w
Northern Ireland 636–7w

Freeman, Rt Hon Roger, Minister of State for Defence
Questions
Antitank missiles 596w
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 4
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Ministry of Defence 365w, 535–6w, 597w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Licensing 142w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Nuclear safety 142w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Radioactive waste disposal 142w
AWE Aldermaston, Construction 141–2w
AWE Aldermaston, Radioactive waste disposal 144w
AWE Aldermaston, Water pollution 142–3w
Ballistic missile defence 364w
Complaints against central government, Ministry of Defence 146–7w

Freeman, Rt Hon Roger*—*continued
Consultants, Ministry of Defence 366w
Contracts for services, Ministry of Defence 147w
Crown immunity, Ministry of Defence 596–7w
Defence equipment 139w, 192w
Defence industries 140w, 363w
Defence procurement, Fraud 4–5
Defence research, USA 297–8w
Defence Research Agency 336–7w
Departmental correspondence, Ministry of Defence 148w
Devonport Dockyard 8
Dockyards, Privatisation 8–9
European fighter aircraft 596w
Foxley, Gordon 5
Government shareholding, Ministry of Defence 148w
Helicopters, Defence procurement 139w, 535w
Inhumane Weapons Convention 598w
Maternity leave, Ministry of Defence 298w
Medium extended air defence system 144w, 596w
Meteorological Office, Performance standards 140w
Mines 12–3
Nimrod aircraft 363w
Nuclear weapons 141w
Parachuting, Defence contracts 140w
Patriot missile system 596w
Rosyth Dockyard, Privatisation 148w
Royal Naval Engineering College 4
Trident submarines 363w
Trident submarines, Sonar 364w

Freight transport
329w

French, Mr Douglas
Questions
Driving offences 474w
Employment level 654w
Income tax, Self-employed 631w
Meteorological Office, Performance standards 140w
Motor insurance, Convictions 642–3w
Self-employed 89w, 195–6w, 647w
Social Security Contributions Agency, Inland Revenue 516w

Friendly societies
246–7w

Frontiers
Gibraltar 203–4

Fry, Sir Peter
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 2

Further education colleges
Educational admission 353–4w
Finance 76–7w
Hotel and catering industry 351–3w
Northern Ireland 353–4w, 465–7w
Wales 76–7w

Further education teachers
Early retirement 416w

Fyfe, Mrs Maria
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 226, 235, 246–7
Questions
Maintenance, Children 117–8w
NHS trusts, Scotland 674–5w
Schools, Charities 215w
Scottish Office, Public appointments 675w

Galbraith, Mr Sam
Questions
Scottish Natural Heritage, Members' correspondence 153w

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 24

Gallie, Mr Phil
Questions
Economic growth, Unemployment 881–2

Gallie, Mr Phil*—*continued
Road construction, Scotland 679–81w
Sewage, Water charges 681–2w

Gaming clubs
127w

Gapes, Mr Mike
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 372–3w
Yugoslavia, Foreign relations 207

Garel-Jones, Rt Hon Tristan
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 23

Garnier, Mr Edward
Questions
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 310–1
Export promotion, East Midlands 779–80
Labour costs 444w
M4 49w

Garrett, Mr John
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 920, 929–31

Gas
see Office of Gas Supply

Gas supply industry
573w
Licensing 66–7w, 368w

Gateside School Paisley
675w

Gecas, Antonas
Nazi war crimes 665w

General certificate of secondary education
Languages education 637–8w

Genetic engineering
Patents 577w

Genetically modified organisms
379w
Crops 609–10w, 649w
Environmental impact assessment 609–10w
Food labelling 511w

Genetically Modified Organisms (Deliberate Release) Regulations 1992
Questions
609–10w

George, Mr Bruce
Questions
Crime prevention, Closed circuit television 482w

Gerrard, Mr Neil
Questions
Clyde submarine base 366w
Prisoners, AIDS 645w
Prisoners, HIV infection 525–6w

Gibraltar
204–5, 344w
Frontiers 203–4

Gill, Mr Christopher
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 934–6
European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between EC and Russian Federation and Ukraine) Orders (08.06.95) 355, 365–70
Questions
Armed forces, Russia 145w
Ballistic missiles, Russia 13–4
Business questions 326–7

Gilmour, Raymond
Prerogative of mercy 675w

Gliders
39w

Gloucestershire
Mortgage relief 890

Goats
Scotland 154w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 220, 222, 224, 226–8, 236, 247–8, 292–3
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 514–5
Questions
Common fisheries policy 314–5
Fine defaulters, Scotland 216w
Gourock Ropeworks 216w
Industrial accidents, Scotland 471w
Inverclyde enterprise zone, Special protection areas 216w
Medical malpractice, Scotland 682w
National Lottery, Voluntary organisations 53–4w
Police, Protective clothing 472w
Post offices, Strathclyde 454w
Prison accommodation, Scotland 471–2w
Shipbuilding Intervention Fund 240–1w
Water pollution, Scotland 217w
World War II, Anniversaries 24w

Golding, Mrs Llin
Debates etc.
Coal mine closures (07.06.95) 168
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 460–2
Questions
National Lottery 199w
Teachers, Child abuse 8–9w

Goodlad, Rt Hon Alastair, Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Questions
British embassies 198
China, Dechen, Joseph Jin 287w
Diplomatic service, Trade promotion 197
Early retirement, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 26w
East Timor 191w
East Timor, Diplomatic service 27w
Japan, Prisoners of war 479w
Locate in Scotland 600w
Maternity leave, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 287w
Phillipines, Prostitution 600w
Tibet, Human rights 220w, 480w

Goodson-Wickes, Dr Charles
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 426–8, 433
Questions
Council tax capping 385w
Western European Union 219w

Gorman, Mrs Teresa
Questions
Common agricultural policy 307–8

Gorst, Sir John
Questions
Edgware Hospital 561w

Gourock Ropeworks
216w

Government buildings
137w, 529–30w
Greater London 44w

Government Communications Headquarters
26–7w

Government departments
Energy conservation 114w
Expenditure 91w, 339w
Internet 380w
Land acquisition 202w

Government grants to local authorities
Bath 249–50w
Pendle 249–50w
Urban railways 531w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
482–3w
Hyperactive Children's Support Group 490w
Wales 406w

Government information services
Northern Ireland Office 637w

Government laboratories
Aberdeen 513w

Government loans to nationalised industries
395w

Government shareholding
396–8w
Ministry of Defence 148w
Scottish Office 170w

GP fundholders
Cumbria 428w
Finance 557–8w
Legal opinion 665w
Northern Ireland 23w
Scotland 591–2w, 665w
Wales 73w, 81w, 413–4w
Warwickshire 423w

Graduates
Unemployment 97–8w, 449w

Grafton Recruitment
346w, 464w

Graham, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 148

Grameen Bank
Bangladesh 190w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Debates etc.
Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, Rep and 3R (12.06.95) 554–5
Questions
A14 474w
Business questions 893
Road safety barriers 617–8w

Grant, Mr Bernie
Questions
Police training, Race relations 522–4w

Grant maintained schools
Clwyd 78w
Inspections 292–3w
School population 410w
Wales 78–9w, 410w

Grants for education support and training
10w, 292w

Grasslands
Wales 661w

Great Yarmouth
Community health councils 360w

Greater London
Armed forces deployment 532–3w
Crime 134w
Government buildings 44w
Helicopters 475w
Lorries 616–7w
Postal deliveries 604–5w

Green papers
345w

Greenbelt
108w
Wakefield 109–10w

Greenham Common
Export of live animals 145w

Greenpeace
AWE Aldermaston 144w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 397–8
Film industry (06.06.95) 25
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 12

Greenway, Mr Harry—continued
Business questions 325, 899–900
Church Commissioners, Company accounts 556w
Church Commissioners, Subsidiary companies 555–6w
Diplomatic service, Trade promotion 208
Electricity supply industry 421
Employment opportunities, Ealing 442w
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 490–1
Jobfinder's grant 587–8
Official engagements 434w
Personal taxation 628w
Public utilities, Privatisation 780
Training, Young people 448–9w

Greenway, Mr John
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 446–9
Questions
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Public expenditure 310

Griffiths, Mr Nigel
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 199
Public utilities, Companies political contributions 784–5

Griffiths, Mr Win
Questions
Armed forces deployment, Wales 10
Exchange rates 627w
Grant maintained schools, Wales 78–9w
Licensed premises 121w
National Consumer Council, Finance 790–1
Pre-school education, Wales 486–7
Teachers, Manpower 407–8w
University of Wales, RAF St Athan 146w

Grocott, Mr Bruce
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 921–2
Film industry (06.06.95) 24–5
Questions
British embassies 198

Group Lyonnaise des Eaux
Northumbrian Water 240w

Group of Seven
886
Economic situation 339–40w

Guided weapons
12

Gulf War syndrome
146w

Gummer, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 904–14, 917, 932–3
Questions
Council tax capping 385w
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 250–1w
Dept of the Environment, Oral questions 108w
UN Commission on Sustainable Development 614–5w

Gwent
Fire services 486

Habitual offenders
Homicide 181w
Mentally disturbed offenders 177w

Habitual residence test
421–2w

Hackney Borough Council
593

Haemophilia
Hepatitis 307w
HIV infection 308–9w

Hague, Mr William, Minister of State, Dept of Social Security
Questions
Cellular phones, Dept of Social Security 118w
Crown immunity, Dept of Social Security 646w
Dept of Social Security, Expenditure 646–7w
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 419w
Incapacity benefit, National insurance contributions 421w
Industrial disablement benefits, Automated credit transfer 492–3w
Maternity leave, Dept of Social Security 270w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of Social Security 538w
Social security benefits, Expenditure 538w
Social security finance 493–4w
Social security finance, EC countries 421w

Hain, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 603
Remploy (14.06.95) 718–20
Questions
African National Congress, Bombings 125w
British Coal Corporation, Loans 267w
Health services, Wales 490
Industrial investment 574w
Railtrack, Debts 81–2w
Repossession orders, Wales 409w

Hall, Mr Mike
Questions
Disabled workers, Engineering industries 539w
Executives, Pay 454w
RAF Burtonwood, Land acquisition 140w

Hampshire
Motor vehicle testing 276w

Hampstead Heath
Capital investment 382w

Handicapped
Personal social services 562–4w, 571w
Wales 571w

Handicapped pupils
Teacher training 415w

Hanson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Corporal Punishment (Reintroduction) Bill, Motion for leave to introduce Bill negatived (06.06.95) 32
Questions
Air force bases, Export of live animals 192w
Armed forces casualties 595w
Autism, Wales 357w
Children in care 625w
Export of live animals, Wales 357w
Health authorities, Wales 404w
Inhumane Weapons Convention 598w
Lloyd's of London 573w
Public libraries 277–8w
Television licences, Prison sentences 643w
VAT zero rating, Home care services 515–6w
Written questions, Parliamentary recess 186–7w

Hard core unemployed
586–7
Barnsley 586–7

Hardy, Mr Peter
Questions
Armed forces training 595w
Firearms 522w
Industrial injuries 539w
Nimrod aircraft 533w
Part-time employment 389w
Pets, Animal welfare 641w
Tenant farmers, Agricultural land 305
Unemployment 319

Hardy, Mr Peter—continued
Whales, Nature conservation 565w

Hargreaves, Mr Andrew
Questions
NATO 219w
Northern Ireland Office, Cash limits 302w
RAF Newton 595–6w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
EC Social Charter 582–3
Health service staff, Southwark 430w
International Labour Organisation 585–6
Southwark Borough Council, Manpower 488w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc.
Remploy (14.06.95) 707–8
Questions
Common fisheries policy 315

Harvey, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 600
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 908–10
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 827–31
Questions
Executives, Pay 787
Theatres, Ilfracombe 112w

Hawkins, Mr Nick
Questions
Civil service, Codes of practice 380w
Local government maladministration 495
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 778

Hawksley, Mr Warren
Debates etc.
Corporal Punishment (Reintroduction) Bill, Motion for leave to introduce Bill negatived (06.06.95) 30–1
Motion to introduce Bill negatived (06.06.95) 30–4
Questions
Local Government Residuary Body (England), Public appointments 489w

Haymes Garth
363w

Heald, Mr Oliver
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 109
Cycling (07.06.95) 127, 132–3
European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between EC and Russian Federation and Ukraine) Orders (08.06.95) 367–8
House of Commons procedure, Points of order (12.06.95) 559
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 828
Remploy (14.06.95) 709, 715–7, 719
Questions
Air transport, USA 228w
Parachuting, Defence contracts 140w
Prisoners' incentives and privileges scheme 342–3w
Queen Victoria School, Performance standards 534–5w
Unemployment 887–8

Health authorities
Land acquisition 561w
Wales 404w

Health education
Epilepsy 415–6w
Infant foods 426w

Health hazards
Mercury 305–6w

Health insurance
NHS trusts 332w, 359w

Health service ancillary staff
Northern Ireland 355w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards 299–301w, 457–62w

Health service staff
Conditions of employment 27w
Expenditure 254w
Northern Ireland 211w
Pay 29w, 335–6w
Private sector 626w
Southwark 430w
Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981 211w
Wales 254w

Health services
Wales 490

Health visitors
Manpower 623w

Heart diseases
Northern Ireland 465w
Scotland 274w
Surgery 67w
Wales 409w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David, Paymaster-General
Questions
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax yields 88–9w
Betting and gaming duties, Tax yields 90w
Currency devaluation 628w
Customs and Excise, Newcastle upon Tyne 85–6w
Customs and Excise, Unfair dismissal 394w
Economic and monetary union 627w, 629w
Exchange rates 627w
Excise duties, Petrol alternatives 93w, 399w
Flowers, Imports 434w
Government departments, Expenditure 91w, 339w
Housing market 882–3
Hydrocarbon oil duties 91w
Land acquisition, Government departments 202w
Matrix Churchill, Legal costs 394w
Official publications, Design 92–3w
Road tax, Tax rates and bands 90–1w
VAT 392w, 433w, 627w
VAT, Energy prices 392w
VAT registration, North West region 92w
VAT zero rating, Home care services 515–6w

Hedges and ditches
383w

Helicopters
Defence industries 62w
Defence procurement 139w, 535w
Greater London 475w

Hendron, Dr Joe
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 509–10, 525–6

Hendry, Mr Charles
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 616–7, 626, 633, 642–9
Questions
Dept of Transport, Empty housing 49w
Diplomatic service, Trade promotion 197
Regional government 888–9

Hepatitis
Haemophilia 307w

Heppell, Mr John
Questions
Kashmir, Religious buildings 217w

Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael, President of the Board of Trade
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company, Ministerial statements (13.06.95) 595–606
Questions
Aerospace industry 574w
Amway United Kingdom 602w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Dept of Trade and Industry 579–80w
British Gas, Productivity 785
British Manufacturing and Research Company 788
Dept of Trade and Industry, Cash limits 238w
Dept of Trade and Industry, MINIS 368w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Public expenditure 788
Deregulation initiative 785–6
Economic growth, Rural areas 575w
Economic situation 788–9
Employers' associations 241w
Forward look 574w
Industrial development 241w
Industrial investment 576w
Land acquisition, Dept of Trade and Industry 62w
Manufacturing industries 574w
Manufacturing industries, Deregulation initiative 785
National Weights and Measures Laboratory, Performance standards 238w
Northumbrian Water, Group Lyonnaise des Eaux 240w
Office of Gas Supply, Pay 451–2w, 604w
One stop shop initiative 789
Patent Office, Performance standards 61w
Post offices, Franchising 456w
Post offices, Strathclyde 454w
Post offices, Supermarkets 456w
Trade missions, China 572w

Heysham 2 Power Station
66w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
Rates and rating, Caravan sites 391–2w
Royal Naval Engineering College 4

Higgins, Rt Hon Sir Terence
Debates etc.
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 342, 347–50
Questions
Court Service Agency 607w
Members' pay 593
Water charges 603w

Hill, Mr James
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 845, 850–2

Hill, Mr Keith
Questions
Dept for Education, Motor vehicles 520w

Hinchliffe, Mr David
Questions
Building industry 109w
Child abuse 626w
Community care, Local government expenditure 429w
Defective housing, Demolition 487w
Dental services, Mercury 32w
Fire regulations, EC law 481w
Fire Safety Enforcement Agencies Review 579w
Foster care 36w
Greenbelt 108w
Greenbelt, Wakefield 109–10w
Home care services, Local government expenditure 429w
Housing benefits 196w, 646w
Mentally ill, Hospital discharges 428w
Mercury, Health hazards 305–6w
NHS trusts, Advertising 32w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 434–6w

Hinchliffe, Mr David*—*continued
Nuclear weapons tests, Radiation protection 146w
Owner occupied housing 487–8w
Primates, Import of live animals 510–1w, 647–8w
Rented housing, Housing construction 487w
Royal Life Saving Society 120w
Shared housing 487w
Social security payments 196–7w
Taxis 473w
Temporary accommodation 542w
Viral haemorrhagic disease 32w
Viruses, Immigration officers 120w
War pensions, Nuclear weapons tests 196w

Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
see English Heritage

HIV infection
Compensation 308–9w
Haemophilia 308–9w
Northern Ireland 635–6w
Prisoners 129w, 169–70w, 525–6w

HM Coastguard
620–1w
North Sea 618–20w

HMS Royal Arthur
Empty housing 436w

Hodge, Ms Margaret
Debates etc.
Members' conduct, Points of order (08.06.95) 332
Questions
Business questions 324
Civil service manpower, Dept of Transport 47w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 317–21w
Civil service manpower, Northern Ireland Office 15w
Civil service redundancies, Dept of Employment 95w
Civil service redundancies, Dept of Transport 47w
Complaints against central government, Dept of Employment 100w
Complaints against central government, Dept of National Heritage 201–2w
Complaints against central government, Dept of the Environment 107w
Complaints against central government, Dept of Trade and Industry 62w
Complaints against central government, Dept of Transport 43–4w
Complaints against central government, Ministry of Defence 146–7w
Complaints against central government, Northern Ireland Office 550–2w
Complaints against central government, Treasury 86w
Complaints against central government, Welsh Office 71w
Consultants, Dept of the Environment 105–6w
Consultants, Dept of Transport 48w
Consultants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 312–3w
Consultants, Ministry of Defence 366w
Consultants, Northern Ireland Office 16w
Consultants, Treasury 83w
Consultants, Welsh Office 68w
Contracts for services, Dept of Employment 96–7w
Contracts for services, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 313–7w
Contracts for services, Ministry of Defence 147w
Contracts for services, Northern Ireland Office 14–5w
Contracts for services, Treasury 85w
Departmental correspondence, Dept for Education 11w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of National Heritage 197–8w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of the Environment 106w

Hodge, Ms Margaret*—*continued
Departmental correspondence, Dept of Trade and Industry 243–5w
Departmental correspondence, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 1w
Departmental correspondence, Ministry of Defence 148w
Early retirement, Dept of National Heritage 197w, 202w
Early retirement, Dept of Transport 235–6w
Early retirement, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 26w
Early retirement, Home Office 129–31w
Early retirement, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 321–4w
Early retirement, Treasury 632w
Early retirement, Welsh Office 255w
Performance standards, Dept of Employment 98w
Performance standards, Northern Ireland Office 548–50w
Performance standards, Treasury 86–7w
Performance standards, Welsh Office 71–2w
Temporary employment, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 324–6w

Hoey, Ms Kate
Debates etc.
Football, Hooliganism (08.06.95) 388–90, 392–3, 395
Questions
National Lottery 592–3

Hogg, Rt Hon Douglas*, *Minister of State, Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Debates etc.
Jerusalem (07.06.95) 189–91
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 377w, 555w, 599–600w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 286w, 478w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hostages 480w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, International assistance 477w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ministers 477w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Peace keeping operations 555w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Postal services 599w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Recognition of states 477w
Chernobyl, EC aid 375w
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 479w
Croatia, Recognition of states 478–9w
Eastern Europe, Overseas investment 376w
International Labour Organisation 209–10, 475–7w
International War Crimes Tribunal 478w
Iraq, Arms embargoes 198–9
Iraq, Sanctions 198
Libyan Arab Republic, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 374w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 218w
Morocco, Foreign relations 207–8
Rwanda, War crimes 285w
Sarajevo, Ethnic groups 477w
Slavonia 477–8w
Slovenia, Armed conflict 286–7w
South East Asia, Nuclear power 375w
Sudan 27w
UN Conference on Women 220w, 287w
United Nations 209
United Nations, USA 209–10
Western Sahara, Referenda 208
World Summit for Social Development 375w
Yugoslavia, Foreign relations 207

Holloway Prison
123–5w
Drug abuse 122w
Prisoners' home leave 279–80w

Home care services
Local government expenditure 429w
VAT zero rating 515–6w

Home Office
Cash limits 179–80w
Early retirement 129–31w
Maternity leave 279w
Paternity leave 279w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 219–21, 223, 237–8
Questions
A1 Steering Group 589w
RAF Turnhouse 365–6w
Theatres, Scotland 467–9w

Home visits
Social security claims 114–5w

Homelessness
Local government functions 612w
Mentally ill 30w, 426–7w
Northern Ireland 634–5w
Wales 569w

Homicide
Habitual offenders 181w
Humphreys, Emma 382w

Homosexuality
Armed forces 6, 12

Honours
345w

Hoover
Takeovers 782

Horam, Mr John*, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Office of Public Service & Science
Questions
Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, Information superhighways 137–8w
Central Office of Information, Performance standards 622–3w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Cash limits 260w
Chartermark scheme 380–1w, 492–3
Citizen's Charter 137w, 492
Citizen's Charter, Compensation 593–4w
Citizen's Charter, Enforcement 492
Civil servants, Repetitive strain injury 593w
Civil service, Recruitment 138w
Civil Service College 380w
Contracts for services 495–6
Contracts for services, NHS 496
Contracts for services, Pension funds 496
Government buildings 137w
Internet, Government departments 380w
Maternity leave, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 275w
Science and technology, Information retrieval 137w
Systematic biology 431–2w
Systematic biology, Research finance 432w
Technology foresight programme 380w

Hordern, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
Deregulation initiative 785–6

Hospices
National Lottery 677w
Scotland 677w

Hospital admissions
Accident and emergency departments 31w, 424w

Hospital beds
Mental patients 335w
Secure psychiatric units 333–4w

Hospital consultants
Disciplinary proceedings 361w
Leave 289w
Wales 289w

Hospital discharges
332–3w
Mentally ill 428w

Hospital patients
Wales 490

Hospital staff
Mentally disturbed offenders 36w

Hospitals
Aberdare 485
Armed forces casualties 338w
Buckinghamshire 33–4w
Croydon 560w
Performance standards 428w
Wales 485

Hostages
Bosnia-Herzegovina 372–3w, 480w

Hotel and catering industry
EC Social Charter 443w
Further education colleges 351–3w
Northern Ireland 351–3w

House condition survey
Wales 489–90w

House of Commons
National Lottery 187w

House of Commons debates
Translation services 23w

House of Commons Liaison Committee
(09.06.95) 470

House prices
594

House purchase
Coal mine closures (07.06.95) 150–69

Housing
Northern Ireland 210w, 552–4w

Housing associations
Scotland 165w

Housing Benefit (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1987
Questions
553w

Housing benefits
25w, 196w, 646w
Rents 115–6w
Social security benefits rules 420w
Students 644w

Housing construction
Rented housing 487w
Wales 569w

Housing improvement
Kirklees Borough Council 429w

Housing market
630w, 882–3
Opposition days (13.06.95) 612–98

Housing occupancy
248w

Housing policy
Northern Ireland 210w

Housing subsidies
249w

***Howard, Rt Hon Michael**, Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 799–807, 810, 816–7
Questions
African National Congress, Bombings 125w
Boundary Commission for England 125w
Early retirement, Home Office 129–31w
Home Office, Cash limits 179–80w
IRA, Prisoners 133w
Maternity leave, Home Office 279w
Prisoners' incentives and privileges scheme 342–3w
Voluntary work 126w

Howarth, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 631
Questions
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 287–9w

Howarth, Mr George
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 405–11, 416, 428, 445, 466–7
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 434w

Howell, Sir Ralph
Questions
Unemployment, Statistics 207–9w

Howells, Dr Kim
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 833, 855–7
Questions
British embassies 210
Race Electronics 484–5

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
Negative equity 14

Hughes, Mr Kevin
Questions
Sites of special scientific interest, Thorne Moors 540w

Hughes, Mr Robert
Questions
ACP countries, EC aid 499–500w
ACP countries, Overseas aid 501–2w
Angola, International aid from international bodies 59w
Angola, Mines 59w, 191w
Eastern Europe, EC aid 304–5w
Southern Africa Development Community, Bilateral aid 497–500w
Southern Africa Development Community, EC aid 496–7w
Southern Africa Development Community, Overseas aid 495–6w
UK contributions, International aid from international bodies 508–10w

Hughes, Mr Robert G
Questions
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 202–3
Stewart, William, Ministerial policy advisors 491

Hughes, Mr Roy
Questions
Fire services, Gwent 486
Unemployment, Wales 405w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Questions
Interest rates 883
Open government, Wales 488–9
Standards in Public Life Select Committee 494
United Nations 209

Human rights
Tibet 220w, 480w

Humphreys, Emma
Homicide 382w

Hunt, Rt Hon David,
Questions
Civil service, Codes of practice 380w
Committee on Standards in Public Life 493–4
Coordination and Presentation of Government Policy Ministerial Committee 137w, 496–8
Duchy of Lancaster 137w
Duchy of Lancaster, Intestacy 258–9w
Election expenditure 494
Local government maladministration 495
Open government 381w
Political parties, Finance 495
Science and technology 432w
Science and technology policy 379–80w, 623w
Standards in Public Life Select Committee 494, 623w
Stewart, William, Ministerial policy advisors 491
Technology foresight programme 491–2

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 508, 516, 518–9
Questions
Nigeria, Democracy 601w

Hunterston
British Steel Corporation 215w

***Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas**, Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 199–201
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 200–1
Cyprus, Politics and government 203
Diplomatic service 208–9
Diplomatic service, Trade promotion 208
Gibraltar 204–5
Gibraltar, Frontiers 203–4
Government Communications Headquarters 26–7w
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 196–7, 218w
International Atomic Energy Agency 222w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 218w
Poland, British embassies 208
Republic of Ireland, Territorial waters 148w
Special Operations Executive, Public records 222w
Treaty on European Union 196

Hutton, Mr John
Debates etc.
Remploy (14.06.95) 707–10
Questions
Legal aid, Fraud 519w
Sixth form education, Tuition fees 638w

Hydrocarbon oil duties
91w

Hyperactive Children's Support Group
Government grants to voluntary organisations 490w

Hyperactivity
427–8w

Identity cards
125w

Ilfracombe
Theatres 112w

Illsley, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 944–6
Questions
Blood 331w
Blood transfusion services, Brentwood 331w
Princess Alexandra Hospital 192w

Immigrant detainees
132w
Costs 135w

Immigration
121w

Immigration officers
Viruses 120w

Immobilisation of vehicles
Association of Chief Police Officers 133–4w

Import of live animals
Primates 510–1w, 647–8w

Import penetration
453w, 455–6w

Imports
Flowers 434w

Incapacity benefit
National insurance contributions 421w

Income support
Burnley 270w
Mortgages 316–7
Northern Ireland 355w
Residential care 115w
Social security benefits rules 117w
Young people 645–6w

Income tax
82w, 516w
Elderly 433w
Self-employed 398–9w, 631w
Tax allowances 205–6w

Independent producers
BBC 200w

India
Overseas trade 454–5w

Indonesia
Aid financed trade 56–9w, 504–6w, 568–9w, 633–4w
Arms trade 779
Chemical weapons 579w
Export credit 239w
Export licensing 239w
Forestry 567–8w, 634w
Ministers' visits abroad 55w
Navigational aids 381w
Overseas loans 55–6w, 381w
Overseas trade 778–9
Police training 57w, 600w
Power stations 567w
Radio 566–8w

Industrial accidents
Scotland 471w

Industrial democracy
443–4w

Industrial development
241w

Industrial disablement benefits
Automated credit transfer 492–3w

Industrial health and safety
Atomic Weapons Establishment 101–2w
Sewage 104–5w, 108–9w, 450–1w
Sheep dipping 101w

Industrial injuries
539w

Industrial investment
88w, 262–4w, 318, 574w, 576w, 628w

Industrial production
Engineering industries 792

Industrial relations law
Trade unions 886–7

Industry training organisations
103w

Infant foods
EC law 565–6w
Health education 426w

Inflation
91w, 630w, 875–80, 887

Influenza
Vaccination 624w

Information retrieval
Science and technology 137w

Information superhighways
Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency 137–8w

Ingram, Mr Adam
Questions
Heysham 2 Power Station 66w
Personal pensions 197–8w

Inheritance tax
Lancashire 265w
Tax rates and bands 266w

Inhumane Weapons Convention
598w

Inland Revenue
Lincoln 345w
Social Security Contributions Agency 516w

Insolvency practitioners
370–1w

Insolvency Service
343–4w
Contracts for services 369–70w

Insurance
Art works 200–1w
Mortgages (13.06.95) 612–98

Integrated Administration and Control System
Departmental forms 80w

Integrated regional offices
Finance 613w

Intellectual property
Educational aid 453w
Legislative drafting 453w

Intensive care
Yorkshire and Humberside 426w

Interest rates
883–4

Intergovernmental Conference 1996
194, 196–7, 201–3, 205–6, 218–9w, 287–9w, 374w, 554–5w

International aid from international bodies
Angola 59w
UK contributions 508–10w

International assistance
Bosnia-Herzegovina 477w

International Atomic Energy Agency
222w

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
see World Bank

International Conference on the Protection of the North Sea
111w

International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
285w

International Fund for Ireland
USA 354w

International Labour Organisation
94–5w, 209–10, 475–7w, 585–6, 655–6w

International Maritime Organisation
475–6w

International Planned Parenthood Federation
Finance 303w
Property transfer 302w
UK contributions 302w

International War Crimes Tribunal
478w

International Whaling Commission
4–6w

Internet
Government departments 380w

Intestacy
Duchy of Lancaster 258–9w

Inverclyde enterprise zone
Special protection areas 216w

Investors in people
99–100w, 283w

IRA
Prisoners 133w

Iran
BBC External Services 375–6w
Nuclear materials 374w

Iraq
Arms embargoes 198–9
BBC External Services 375–6w
Sanctions 198

Irish Sea
Special areas of conservation 21–2w

Iron and steel industry
62–3w

Iron and steel industry—continued
Recruitment 241w

Isle of Wight
Average earnings 444w

Italy
Exports 241–2w
Tourism 67w

Jack, Mr Michael, Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
Questions
Agricultural land, Sewage 378w
Agricultural products 305–6
Agricultural subsidies, Spain 313–4
Bulls, Animal breeding 314
Coastal erosion 564w
Common fisheries policy 211w, 314–5
Departmental correspondence, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 1w
European Commission, Tobacco 2w
Farmers, Early retirement 566w
Fish conservation 310w
Fisheries 309w
Fisheries, Spain 6w
Fishing quotas 648w
Fishing quotas, Republic of Ireland 379w
Food exports, Export promotion 311–2w
Food stocks 1w
International Whaling Commission 4–6w
Maternity leave, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 312w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Deregulation initiative 511–2w
Seas and oceans, Waste disposal 377w
Set-aside schemes 310w
Set-aside schemes, Access to countryside 310w
Sheep premiums 312w
Viticulture, Agricultural subsidies 514w
Whales, Nature conservation 565w

Jackson, Ms Glenda
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 456–8
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 622w
Business questions 899
Export of live animals 513w
Homelessness, Local government functions 612w
Lorries, Greater London 616–7w
Nuclear non proliferation 139–40w
Rolling stock 622w
Sheep premiums 312w
Slaughterhouses 512w

Jackson, Mrs Helen
Questions
Adoption, Step-parents 626–7w
Age discrimination 391w
Business questions 328–9
Industrial health and safety, Sewage 104–5w, 450–1w
Iron and steel industry 62–3w
Iron and steel industry, Recruitment 241w
Public utilities, Consumer protection 575–6w
Sewage, Industrial health and safety 108–9w
UN Conference on Women 220w
Vacancies, Age discrimination 390–1w

Jackson, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 333–5, 341, 345, 348, 354

Jamieson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 907, 939–41
Questions
Armed forces housing 365w
Devonport Dockyard 8
English Heritage, Urban development corporations 517–8w
HMS Royal Arthur, Empty housing 436w

Jamieson, Mr David—continued
Private education 637w
Royal William Dockyard Plymouth, Listed buildings 518–9w
Urban development corporations 384w

Janner, Mr Greville
Questions
Employment protection 585
Morocco, Foreign relations 207–8

Japan
Prisoners of war 479w

Jenkin, Mr Bernard
Questions
Business questions 329
Dept of Trade and Industry, Public expenditure 788
EC Social Charter 585
European Parliament 202
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 218w, 554–5w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Ministerial duties 309
Public expenditure, Wales 482
Small businesses 873–4
Social security finance 889–90

Jerusalem
(07.06.95) 186–91

Jessel, Mr Toby
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 26
Questions
Public utilities, Companies political contributions 784

Job centres
Vacancies 390–1w

Job release scheme
653w

Jobclubs
389–90w

Jobfinder's grant
586–8

Jobplan workshops
387–90w

Jobseeker's allowance
102w
Nottinghamshire 443w
Students 656w

Jobseekers Bill 1994/95
Questions
891–902

Jobshare scheme
590

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 15–6

Johnstone bypass
Road accidents 674w

Jones, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 633–4
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Wales 76w
Drug abuse, Wales 68w
Employment 103–4w
Further education colleges, Finance 76–7w
Grant maintained schools, Clwyd 78w
Land pollution, Wales 255w
Nu-Kote International 79–80w
Nursery schools, Wales 79w
Special constables, North Wales 130w
Special education, Wales 75w
Surgery, Heart diseases 67w
Teachers, Early retirement 76w
Unemployment 579–80
Unemployment, Wales 480

Jones, Mr Gwilym, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Questions
Accidents, Farms 358w
Agricultural land 661–2w

Jones, Mr Gwilym—continued
British Rail, Privatisation 481–2
Car ownership, Wales 490w
Coastal erosion, Wales 569–70w
Councillors' allowances, Wales 486
Countryside Council for Wales, Finance 409w
Countryside stewardship scheme, Wales 660–1w
Environment protection, Wales 661w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 68–70w
Export of live animals, Wales 357w
Fire services, Gwent 486
Foreign investment in UK, Wales 490–1
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Wales 406w
Grasslands, Wales 661w
Homelessness, Wales 569w
House condition survey, Wales 489–90w
Housing construction, Wales 569w
Integrated Administration and Control System, Departmental forms 80w
Land pollution, Wales 255w
Local government reform, Wales 486–7
Pre-school education, Wales 486–7
Radioactive waste disposal, Anglesey 490w
RAF Valley, Contracts for services 479–80
Repossession orders, Wales 409w
River Severn, Bridges 406w
Rural areas, Wales 255w
Slaughterhouses, Wales 289w
Special areas of conservation, Wales 660w
Town and country planning, Wales 490w
Toxic metals, Sea pollution 407w
Young people, Wales 569w

Jones, Mr Ieuan Wyn
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Postal services 599w
Hyperactive Children's Support Group, Government grants to voluntary organisations 490w
Hyperactivity 427–8w
Integrated Administration and Control System, Departmental forms 80w
Radioactive waste disposal, Anglesey 490w
RAF Valley 11
RAF Valley, Contracts for services 479
Slaughterhouses, Wales 289w
Turkey, Religious freedom 376–7w
Welsh language, Public utilities 256–7w
Welsh Office, Languages 570w

Jones, Mr Jon Owen
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 95
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 481
UN Protection Force, Bosnia-Herzegovina 139w

Jones, Dr Lynne
Questions
Complaints against police, Disclosure of information 642w
Deserts, Overseas aid 504w, 566w
Drug crimes, Nigeria 124w
Export of live animals, Baginton Airport 212w
Forward look 574w
Helicopters, Defence procurement 535w
Holloway Prison 123–5w
Holloway Prison, Drug abuse 122w
Prisoners, Drug crimes 181w
Prisoners, Women 123–4w
Prisoners' home leave, Holloway Prison 279–80w
Prisoners on remand 128w
Women's prisons, Drug crimes 174–6w

Jones, Mr Martyn
Questions
Accidents, Farms 358w
Agricultural land, Sewage 250w, 378w
Alcoholic drinks duties, Tax yields 88–9w
Baby milks, Sponsorship 426w
Car ownership, Wales 490w

Jones, Mr Martyn—continued
Consumers in the European Community Group 603–4w
Dental health, Northern Ireland 464–5w
Dental health, Scotland 214w
Dental health, Wales 405w
Dental health, Young people 558w
Dental services, Expenditure 215w
Dental services, Northern Ireland 356w
Dental services, Wales 404–6w
Food consumption, Buy British 304
Food hygiene, EC law 648–9w
Food labelling 511w, 566w
Food labelling, Genetically modified organisms 511w
Free school meals, Northern Ireland 636–7w
Genetically modified organisms 379w
Gliders 39w
Heart diseases, Northern Ireland 465w
Heart diseases, Scotland 274w
Heart diseases, Wales 409w
Homelessness, Wales 569w
Housing construction, Wales 569w
Infant foods, EC law 565–6w
Infant foods, Health education 426w
"Lifestyles in Rural Wales" 78w
Livestock, Veterinary drugs 509–10w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Deregulation initiative 511–2w
National Consumer Council, Finance 790–1
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 219w
Nutrition and health 30–1w, 211–2w
Nutrition and health, Children 565w
Nutrition and health, Northern Ireland 346w
Nutrition and health, Scotland 153w
Nutrition and health, Wales 73w
Organophosphorous pesticides 649w
Petrol alternatives, Excise duties 93w
Road tax 475w
Road tax, Tax rates and bands 90–1w
Rural areas 379w
Rural areas, Unemployment 77w
Rural areas, Wales 255w
School meals 520w
School meals, Scotland 590w
Veterinary drugs, Antibiotics 431w
Welsh language 659w
Young people, Wales 569w

Jones, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 905, 908, 918
Questions
Retail price index 84–5w
Right of search 441w
Teachers, Pay 521w

Jones, Mr Robert B, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of the Environment
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 929
Questions
Bellwin scheme, Weymouth and Portland Borough Council 251w
Building industry 109w
Defective housing, Demolition 487w
Defective housing, Public sector housing 384–5w
Direct labour departments, Financial targets 112–3w
Energy conservation, Government departments 114w
Exhaust emission controls, Parking 107w
Government grants to local authorities, Pendle 249–50w
Hampstead Heath, Capital investment 382w
Homelessness, Local government functions 612w
Housing occupancy 248w
Local authorities, Contracts for services 251–3w

Jones, Mr Robert B—continued
Local government reform 110w
Local government reform, Berkshire 384w
Local Government Residuary Body (England), Public appointments 489w
Local government staff 485–6w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 383w
National parks, Local government finance 540–1w
Owner occupied housing 487–8w
Rented housing, Housing construction 487w
Shared housing 487w
Southwark Borough Council, Manpower 488w
Succession 108w
Temporary accommodation 542w
Uniform business rate 106w
Video recordings, Prosecutions 482w

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Questions
United Nations, USA 209

Journalists
Official visits 221–2w

Judgments
7w
Administrative delays 607w

Kashmir
217–8w
Religious buildings 217w

Keen, Mr Alan
Debates etc.
Environmental Claims Bill, 1R (15.06.95) 903

Kellett-Bowman, Dame Elaine
Debates etc.
Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, Rep and 3R (12.06.95) 551
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 809, 813–4, 817
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 18
Contracts for services, Pension funds 496

Kennedy, Mrs Jane
Questions
NHS trusts, Contracts for services 429–30w
Phillipines, Prostitution 600w
Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust 430w

Kenya
Constitutions 220–1w
Members 221w

Key, Mr Robert
Questions
Boscombe Down, Manpower 145–6w
Tenant farmers, Agricultural land 304–5

Khabra, Mr Piara S
Questions
Executives, Pay 454w

King, Rt Hon Tom
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 599

Kintore bypass
367w

Kirklees Borough Council
Housing improvement 429w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Questions
Occupational health, Manpower 561–2w
Prisoners, HIV infection 169–70w

Knapman, Mr Roger
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 905
Questions
Councillors' allowances, Wales 486

Knapman, Mr Roger—continued
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 306
Inflation 875–6
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 205

Knight, Mrs Angela
Questions
Central Science Laboratory 1–3w
EC Agriculture Council 3w
International Whaling Commission 4–6w
Science and technology policy 379–80w
Unemployment, Statistics 580–1

Knox, Sir David
Questions
Entry clearances, Overseas workers 479w
Government grants to voluntary organisations, Wales 406w
Manufacturing industries 574w

Kynoch, Mr George, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
British Steel Corporation, Hunterston 215w
Dumbartonshire Enterprise 273w
Gourock Ropeworks 216w
Inverclyde enterprise zone, Special protection areas 216w
Party conferences, Scotland 149w
Regional selective assistance, Scotland 275w, 368w
Revenue support grant, Scotland 673–4w
Scottish councils, Executives 678w
Scottish Nuclear, Privatisation 214w
Sewage, Water charges 681–2w
Taxis, Airports 672–3w

Labour costs
444w

Lait, Mrs Jacqui
Questions
Public sector borrowing 884–5

Lancashire
Inheritance tax 265w
Post offices 63w
Special education 484w
Taxation 82w
Young offenders 181–2w

Land acquisition
Defence land 537w
Dept for Education 7w
Dept of Health 35w, 559–61w
Dept of National Heritage 51w
Dept of the Environment 296w, 541–2w
Dept of Trade and Industry 62w
Dept of Transport 37w
Government departments 202w
Health authorities 561w
Ministry of Defence 145w
RAF Burtonwood 140w

Land pollution
610w
Wales 255w

Landing rights
48w

Lang, Rt Hon Ian, Secretary of State for Scotland
Questions
Civil service, Recruitment 213w
Councillors, Local government maladministration 167–8w
Direct labour departments, Finance 155–68w
Direct labour departments, Redundancy 166w, 169w
Environmental education, Scotland 274–5w
Goats, Scotland 154w
Government shareholding, Scottish Office 170w
Local government services, Competition 154w, 168–9w
Maternity leave, Scottish Office 330w
Railway travel, Strathclyde 592w
Road construction, Scotland 679–81w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 217w

Lang, Rt Hon Ian—continued
Sheep premiums, Scotland 470–1w

Languages
Welsh Office 570w

Languages education
General certificate of secondary education 637–8w

Law Officer's Dept
see Attorney General

Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990
Questions
275w

Lead poisoning
Children 43w

Leaseholders Protection Bill 1994/95
Debates etc.
1R (07.06.95) 212–4

Leave
Hospital consultants 289w

Leave of absence
Speaker (08.06.95) 354

Legal aid
Bacchus, Kasim Mohamed 440–1w
Civil proceedings 606w
Fraud 519w
Recovery of costs 441w

Legal costs
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 373–4w
Matrix Churchill 394w

Legal opinion
GP fundholders 665w

Legal Services Ombudsman
439w

Legg, Mr Barry
Questions
Economic and monetary union 316

Legislative drafting
Intellectual property 453w

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 601
Questions
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 777

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 59–62
Questions
Mines 13

Lestor, Miss Joan
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 44, 46–53, 81
Questions
Aid financed trade 502w
Developing countries, Debts 59w
Malaysia, Aid financed trade 304w
Overseas Development Administration, Contingency reserve 54–5w

Lewis, Mr Terry
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 807
Questions
Animal experiments, Tobacco 524–5w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 400w
UN Protection Force, Bosnia-Herzegovina 139w

Liberia
Overseas aid 305w

Libyan Arab Republic
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 374w

Licensed premises
121w

Liddell, Helen
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 26
PowerGen, Points of order (12.06.95) 499
Questions
Business questions 326
Food inspection, Meat 590w
Meat Hygiene Service, Manpower 590w
Temazepam 624–5w

Lidington, Mr David
Questions
Dept of Transport, Cash limits 227–8w
Hospitals, Buckinghamshire 33–4w
Kashmir 217–8w

"Lifestyles in Rural Wales"
77–8w

Lighting
M66 50w
Pollution control 154w
Scotland 154w

Lilley, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for Social Security
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 617, 622–32, 650, 687
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Dept of Social Security 647w

Lincoln
Inland Revenue 345w

Lindane
309w

Listed buildings
City of Westminster 293w
Royal William Dockyard Plymouth 518–9w
Yorkshire and Humberside 605–6w

Littler Inquiry
see Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy Confidential Inquiry

Liverpool
Prosecutions 6–7w

Livestock
Veterinary drugs 509–10w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
International Labour Organisation, Points of order (08.06.95) 331
Questions
Brazil, Military attaches 284w
Rwanda, Arms trade 195

Lloyd's of London
573w

Llwyd, Mr Elfyn
Questions
Local government reform, Wales 487
Motor vehicle safety 473w
Youth unemployment 445w

Loans
British Coal Corporation 267w
Companies 85w

Local authorities
Contracts for services 251–3w

Local broadcasting
Cable television 53w

Local enterprise agencies
Cooperatives 247w

Local Government Act 1988
Questions
73–5w, 154–60w, 163–8w

Local Government Act 1992
Questions
75w, 168–9w

Local government constituencies
Northern Ireland 22w

Local Government Etc (Scotland) Act 1994
Questions
681–2w

Local government expenditure
Community care 429w
Home care services 429w

Local government finance
National parks 540–1w

Local government functions
Homelessness 612w

Local government maladministration
495, 593
Councillors 75w, 167–8w
Scotland 167–8w
Wales 75w

Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980
Questions
73–5w, 159–69w

Local government reform
110w, 486w
Berkshire 384w
South Hams 611w
Wales 413w, 486–7, 489w

Local Government Residuary Body (England)
Public appointments 489w

Local government services
Children 188w
Competition 75w, 154w, 168–9w
Contracts for services 112–3w, 299–300w, 491–2w
Northern Ireland 299–300w
Scotland 154w, 168–9w
Wales 75w

Local government social services
562w
Northern Ireland 542–8w
Scotland 590–2w
Wales 570–2w

Local government staff
485–6w

Local Investment Fund
111w

Local plans
Wales 256w

Locate in Scotland
600w

Locums
Family practitioner services (14.06.95) 863–72

London Local Authorities (No 2) Bill (HL) 1992/93
Debates etc.
Order for consideration read (08.06.95) 303, (15.06.95) 873

Lone parents
Social security benefits 195w

"Looking at a Local Court's Charter"
607w

Lord Chancellor's Dept
Maternity leave 271w
Paternity leave 271w

Lorries
Greater London 616–7w
Road damage 403–4w

Lorry drivers
Working hours 401w

Low flying
Barnoldswick 436w
Military aircraft 537w

Low incomes
(07.06.95) 178–85, 386w, 516w
Tax burden 516w

Low pay
Blaenau Gwent 484
Northern Ireland health and social services boards 300w

Lowe Bell Communications
186w

Loyden, Mr Eddie
Questions
Business questions 894
Rwanda, Foreign relations 220w

Luff, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 57–8, 64–72, 101
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 817, 831–6, 861
Questions
Business questions 324–5, 900
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Cash limits 260w

Lulworth
Armed forces deployment 140–1w

Luton University
Finance (07.06.95) 170–7

Lyell, Rt Hon Sir Nicholas, Attorney-General
Debates etc.
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 340–4
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Attorney General 385–6w, 527w, 640–1w
Crown immunity, Attorney General 641w
Maternity leave, Attorney General 272w
Police discipline, Disclosure of information 451w
Private prosecutions 527–8w
Treasury Solicitor's Dept, Cash limits 185w

Lynne, Ms Liz
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 619–20, 627
Questions
Business questions 893
Hospitals, Performance standards 428w
Low incomes 516w
Maintenance, Children 422w, 492w
Maintenance, Prisoners 538–9w

M4
49w

M5
Road traffic 230w
Road works 228–34w

M6
Road traffic 230w
Road works 228–34w

M65
403w

M66
Lighting 50w

McAvoy, Mr Thomas
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 537
Questions
Defence procurement, Fraud 4–5
Hoover, Takeovers 782

McCartney, Mr Ian
Questions
Public utilities, Redundancy 587
Sheep dipping, Industrial health and safety 101w

McCrea, Rev William
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 522–4, 526

Macdonald, Mr Calum
Questions
Brent Spar 889
Crofters Commission, Operating costs 272–3w

Macdonald, Mr Calum—continued
Crofting counties agricultural grants scheme, Scotland 273w
Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Dept, Crofting 273w

McFall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 222, 241–5, 249–51, 255, 257, 259–63, 267–73, 284–7, 290–2, 294
Questions
Cancer, Argyle and Clyde Health Board 586–8w
Dumbartonshire Enterprise 273w
Party conferences, Scotland 149w
Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill 1994/95 345w

McGrady, Mr Eddie
Questions
Ambulance services, Early retirement 355w
Deserts, Overseas aid 59w
Economic surveys, Northern Ireland 356w
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 353w
Environment protection, Northern Ireland 465w
Farms, Northern Ireland 463w
Fishing quotas, Republic of Ireland 379w
Foreign investment in UK, Northern Ireland 17–21w
Housing, Northern Ireland 210w
Housing policy, Northern Ireland 210w
Income support, Northern Ireland 355w
Irish Sea, Special areas of conservation 21–2w
Local government constituencies, Northern Ireland 22w
Northern Ireland Electricity, Privatisation 464w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Finance 464w
Northern Ireland Office, Ministerial policy advisors 210w
Public appointments, Northern Ireland 22w
Water distribution, South Down 12–4w

Mackinlay, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 692–3
Intervention during Ministerial statement (13.06.95) 603
Oral question time intervention (08.06.95) 318
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Disclosure of information 373w
Cable television, Thurrock 278w
Coordination and Presentation of Government Policy Ministerial Committee 496–7
Fine defaulters 173w
International Conference on the Protection of the North Sea 112w
Local government reform 110w
Official visits, Journalists 221–2w
Palace of Westminster, Fire services 328w
Poland, British embassies 208
Royal family, Official engagements 602w
Take-up of employment 589–90

Maclean, Mr David, Minister of State, Home Office
Questions
AIDS, Forensic science 481w
Association of Chief Police Officers, Immobilisation of vehicles 133–4w
Complaints against police, Disclosure of information 642w
Crime, Greater London 134w
Crime prevention, Closed circuit television 482w
Evidence, Children 129–30w, 525w
Fine defaulters 173w
First offenders, West Yorkshire 480w
Homicide, Habitual offenders 181w
Metropolitan Police, Overtime 279w

Maclean, Mr David—continued
Metropolitan Police, Protective clothing 131w
Motor insurance, Convictions 642–3w
Motor vehicle theft 131–2w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 185w
Police, Disciplinary proceedings 126–7w
Police, Divers 258w
Police, Early retirement 526–7w
Police, Protective clothing 173w
Police national computer 183–5w
Police Research Group 131w
Police training, Race relations 522–4w
Rape 642w
Rich, Marc, Tax evasion 526w
Riot control weapons 121w
Security industry 481w
Special constables, North Wales 130w
Taxis, Touting 135–6w
"Tomorrows Job", Criminal investigation 136w, 480–1w
Video recordings, Prosecutions 482w
West Midlands Police, Disciplinary proceedings 126–7w
Young offenders, Lancashire 181–2w
Young offenders, West Yorkshire 480w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 23–4
Questions
Lighting, Pollution control 154w

McLoughlin, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 909
House of Commons procedure, Points of order (12.06.95) 559
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 815
Questions
BBC, Independent producers 200w
Business questions 323, 902
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 312
Economic policy 885
Local government staff 485–6w
National parks, Local government finance 540–1w
Public utilities, Standing charges 793
School meals, Expenditure 208w

McMaster, Mr Gordon
Questions
Drug abuse, Scotland 679w
Fergusie Community Business Securities, Contracts 676w
Fergusie Park Partnership, Civil servants' secondment 675–6w
Former Prime Ministers, Pay 601–2w
Gateside School Paisley 675w
Gilmour, Raymond, Prerogative of mercy 675w
Hospices, National Lottery 677w
Johnstone bypass, Road accidents 674w
Parliamentary questions, Dept for Education 639w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of Health 562w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of Social Security 538w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of the Environment 541w, 611w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of Transport 617w
Parliamentary questions, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 599w
Parliamentary questions, Members' interests 602w
Parliamentary questions, Prime Minister 528w
Parliamentary questions, Welsh Office 659–60w
Prime Minister, Public appointments 528–9w
Procurators fiscal 171w
Revenue support grant, Scotland 673–4w
Scottish councils, Executives 678w
Scottish courts 672w
Scottish Homes 172w, 674w

McMaster, Mr Gordon—continued
Scottish Homes, Tenants 272w
Security industry, Scotland 677–8w
Taxis, Airports 672–3w

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc.
Contracts for services, Points of order (12.06.95) 498
Questions
Ministers, Pay 345w
Office of Gas Supply, Pay 604w
Teachers' Pensions Agency, Privatisation 416w

MacShane, Mr Denis
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 131, 135, 144–5
Employers' Organisations Bill, 1R (14.06.95) 796–8
Housing market (13.06.95) 692
Oral question time intervention (07.06.95) 202
Questions
AIDS, Forensic science 425–6w, 481w
Business questions 323
Committee on Standards in Public Life 493–4
Employers' associations 241w
Engineering Employers' Federation 241w
European Parliament 201–2
Fiscal policy 877–8
Industrial development 241w
International Labour Organisation 475–7w
Rich, Marc, Tax evasion 526w
Weapons, China 9
World Summit for Social Development 375w

Madagascar
Overseas aid 509w

Madden, Mr Max
Debates etc.
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 349
Members' conduct, Points of order (08.06.95) 331–2
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Disclosure of information 374w
Business questions 325
Civil disorder, Bradford 888
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 267w
"Tomorrows Job", Criminal investigation 136w, 480–1w

Maddock, Diana
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 638–42
Questions
Married personal allowance 433w, 516w

Madel, Sir David
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 838, 846
Questions
Business questions 898
Middle East, Peace negotiations 218w

Magistrates' courts
Courts' Charter 607w

Mahon, Mrs Alice
Debates etc.
Drug abuse, Points of order (14.06.95) 795
Questions
Lindane 309w

Maintenance
Children 117–8w, 422w, 492w
Prisoners 538–9w

Maitland, Lady Olga
Debates etc.
Bristol Cancer Help Centre (14.06.95) 755–6
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 50, 57, 86, 88–94, 96
Cycling (07.06.95) 128–9, 133, 135
Questions
Business questions 325–6, 900
Teachers' pensions, Private sector 205–8w

***Major, Rt Hon John**, Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service*
Questions
Airlines, Subsidies 318–9
Archives, Former ministers 25w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 15–6, 18, 434w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Disclosure of information 373–4w, 601w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Legal costs 373–4w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Prime Minister 530w, 601w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 372–3w
Churchill, Winston LS, Archives 24w
Common fisheries policy 374w
Conservative Party 17–8
Councillors' attendance allowances, Mid Glamorgan 319–20
Devolution 591–2
Economic and monetary union 316, 591
Elderly, Standard of living 25w
European Commission 17
Executives, Pay 186w
Former Prime Ministers, Pay 601–2w
Government buildings 529–30w
Green papers 345w
Hackney Borough Council 593
Honours 345w
House prices 594
Housing benefits 25w
Income support, Mortgages 316–7
Industrial investment 318
Inland Revenue, Lincoln 345w
Lowe Bell Communications 186w
Members' pay 593
Ministers, Broadcasting 25w
Ministers, Pay 345w
Mortgages 16–7
National Lottery 592–3
Negative equity 14
NHS reform 317–8
Non-teaching staff, Manpower 25w
Office of Gas Supply, Executives 529w
Official engagements 434w
Parliamentary questions, Members' interests 602w
Parliamentary questions, Prime Minister 528w
Prime Minister, Public appointments 528–9w
Prime minister's questions 271w, 602w
Prisoners' release, Terrorism 602w
Royal family, Official engagements 602w
School transport 590–1
School transport, Essex 14–5
Thatcher, RtHonBaroness 593
Trade competitiveness 372w
Unemployment 319
Unemployment, Warwickshire 320
University finance 593–4
West Coast railway line 18
Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill 1994/95 345w
World War II, Anniversaries 24w

Malaysia
Aid financed trade 304w
Forest products 634w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 504–5, 509–10, 524, 532–7

***Malone, Mr Gerald**, Minister of State, Dept of Health*
Debates etc.
Family practitioner services (14.06.95) 866–72
Questions
British Fluoridation Society 34–5w
Committee on Standards in Public Life, NHS 187w
Community health councils 332w
Community health councils, Great Yarmouth 360w
Dental charges 36w

***Malone, Mr Gerald**—continued*
Dental health, Young people 558w
Dental services 330–1w
Dental services, Mercury 32w
Doctors' list of patients 29w
EC Health Council 187–8w
Epilepsy, Prescription drugs 336w
Eye tests, Optical charges 187w
Family doctors, Accident and emergency departments 27–8w
Family doctors, Vacancies 361w
Family practitioner services, Crime 188w
Family practitioner services, Manpower 36w
Fluoridation 563w
GP fundholders, Cumbria 428w
GP fundholders, Finance 557–8w
GP fundholders, Warwickshire 423w
Health service staff, Conditions of employment 27w
Health service staff, Pay 29w, 335–6w
Health service staff, Southwark 430w
Hospital consultants, Disciplinary proceedings 361w
Members' correspondence 335w
Mercury, Health hazards 305–6w
NHS, Drugs 188–9w
NHS, Executives 563w
NHS trusts, Health insurance 332w, 359w
NHS trusts, Negligence 360w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 624w
Phenobarbitone 425w
Prescription drugs 306–7w, 625w
St Bartholomew's NHS Trust 33w
Tower Hamlets 558–60w
Viral haemorrhagic disease 32w

Management consultants
Welsh Office 68w

Manchester Airport
Railway network 400w

Mans, Mr Keith
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 886
Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations, Shipbuilding 251w
Interest rates 883
NATO 11
"Survey of Derelict Land in England 1993" 327–8w

Manufactured exports
454w

Manufactured imports
87–8w

Manufacturing industries
395–6w, 574w
Civil servants' secondment 64w
Deregulation initiative 785
Employment opportunities 782–3
Price increases 87w
Productivity 93–4w
Profitability 81–4w
West Midlands 791–2

Marek, Dr John
Questions
TACP Architects, Welsh Office 414–5w

Marland, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 905, 907
Questions
Mortgage relief, Gloucestershire 890

Marlow, Mr Tony
Questions
Business questions 895
Electricity tariffs 66w
European Commission, Tobacco 2w
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 196–7

Married personal allowance
433w, 516w

Marshall, Mr Jim
Questions
Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992, Sikhs 447–8w

Marshall, Mr John
Debates etc.
Cyprus (14.06.95) 729–33, 740
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 801, 803, 825–7, 834
Questions
Business questions 324, 894–5
Diplomatic service 208–9
Exports 781–2
Foxley, Gordon 5
Hampstead Heath, Capital investment 382w
Hard core unemployed 587
Hepatitis, Haemophilia 307w
Legal aid, Bacchus, Kasim Mohamed 440–1w
Milk Marque 309–10w
Social security benefits, Lone parents 195w
Unemployment, Wales 484

Marshall, Sir Michael
Questions
United Nations, USA 210

Martin, Mr David
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 643, 658–63

Martin, Mr Michael J
Questions
House of Commons, National Lottery 187w

Martlew, Mr Eric
Questions
Armed forces, Sex discrimination 6–7
West Coast railway line 18

Maternity leave
Attorney General 272w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 275w
Dept for Education 290w
Dept of Employment 283w
Dept of Health 309w
Dept of National Heritage 278w
Dept of Social Security 270w
Dept of the Environment 294w
Dept of Trade and Industry 268w
Dept of Transport 275–6w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 287w
Home Office 279w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 271w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 312w
Ministry of Defence 298w
Northern Ireland Office 301–2w
Scottish Office 330w
Treasury 338–9w

Mathematics education
12w

Matrix Churchill
Legal costs 394w

***Mawhinney, Rt Hon Brian**, Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air transport, USA 228w
Dept of Transport, Cash limits 227–8w
Night flying 328w

Maxwell, Kevin
Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 333–54

***Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick**, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 501–11, 536–7
Questions
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 362w

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick—continued
Northern Ireland Office, Ministerial policy advisors 210w

Meacher, Mr Michael
Questions
Public transport, Expenditure 38w
Railway closures 276w
Railway maintenance 38w
Railway transport, Investment 38–9w, 49–50w

Meat
Exports 311w
Food inspection 590w

Meat Hygiene Service
310–1w
Manpower 590w
Scotland 590w

Medical malpractice
Scotland 682w

Medical (Professional Performance) Bill 1994/95
Debates etc.
Rep and 3R (12.06.95) 548–58

Medical treatments
Asthma 257–8w
Cancer 308w
Fertility 367w

Medium extended air defence system
144w, 596w

Members
Kenya 221w

Members' correspondence
335w
British Telecom 605w
Scottish Natural Heritage 153w

Members' interests
Parliamentary questions 602w

Members' oath and affirmation
Cunningham, Roseanna (06.06.95) 28

Members' pay
593

Members' staff
Personal pensions 359w

Mental health community care
European Convention on Human Rights 333w

Mental Health (Patients in the Community) Bill (HL) 1994/95
Questions
332–3w

Mental health services
Expenditure 334w
Wales 664w

Mental illness
30w

Mental patients
Hospital beds 335w

Mentally disturbed offenders
30w, 120–1w, 341–2w
Habitual offenders 177w
Hospital staff 36w
Prisoners' outings 175–7w
Special hospitals 118–9w

Mentally ill
Homelessness 30w, 426–7w
Hospital discharges 428w
Suicide 306w

Merchant, Mr Piers
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 137–9
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 415, 462–3
Leaseholders Protection Bill, 1R (07.06.95) 212–4

Merchant Shipping (Survey and Certification) Regulations 1995
Debates etc.
(07.06.95) 211

Mercury
Dental services 32w, 305–6w
Health hazards 305–6w

Merseyside
EC grants and loans 613w

Meteorological Office
Performance standards 140w

Metro Goldwyn Mayer
Rank Organisation 239w

Metropolitan Police
Overtime 279w
Protective clothing 131w

Michael, Mr Alun
Questions
Crime, Greater London 134w
Security industry 481w

Michie, Mr Bill
Questions
Business questions 898
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 63w

Michie, Mrs Ray
Questions
Asthma, Scotland 150–1w

Mid Glamorgan
Councillors' attendance allowances 319–20

Middle East
Peace negotiations 218w

Milburn, Mr Alan
Questions
Accident and emergency departments 332w
Defence costs study 7, 366w
Economic situation, Group of Seven 339–40w
Family doctors, Vacancies 361w
Government loans to nationalised industries 395w
Government shareholding 396–8w
NHS, Accountants 361w
NHS trusts, Finance 359w
NHS trusts, Negligence 360w
Public investment 433w
Regional health authorities, Capital investment 360w
Training and enterprise councils, Finance 656–9w
Unemployment 99w, 444w
Unemployment, Graduates 97–8w, 449w

Military aircraft
Low flying 537w
Wales 537w
West Cumbria 193w

Military attaches
Brazil 284w

Military exercises
437–8w
Navy 437w

Military vehicles
438w

Milk
Production quotas 310w

Milk Marque
309–10w

Miller, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 604–5
Questions
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 4
Business questions 900
Iraq, Sanctions 198
Prescription drugs 306–7w, 625w
Public sector borrowing requirement 629w
Social security claims, Home visits 114–5w

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Meat, Exports 311w

Mines
12–3
Angola 59w, 191w
Armed forces training 437w

Minimum wage
878

MINIS
Dept of Trade and Industry 368w

Ministerial Committee on Coordination and Presentation of Government Policy
see Coordination and Presentation of Government Policy Ministerial Committee

Ministerial duties
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 309

Ministerial policy advisors
Northern Ireland Office 210w
Stewart, William 491

Ministerial statements
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 595–606
Film industry (06.06.95) 19–28

Ministers
Bosnia-Herzegovina 477w
Broadcasting 25w
Pay 345w

Ministers' visits abroad
Brussels 70w
Indonesia 55w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 650w
Civil service manpower 317–21w
Civil service redundancies 317–9w
Consultants 312–3w
Contracts for services 313–7w
Departmental correspondence 1w
Deregulation initiative 511–2w
Early retirement 321–4w
Maternity leave 312w
Ministerial duties 309
Paternity leave 312w
Public expenditure 309–10
Temporary employment 324–6w

Ministry of Defence
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 365w, 535–6w, 597w
Bath 297w
Complaints against central government 146–7w
Consultants 366w
Contracts for services 147w
Crown immunity 596–7w
Departmental correspondence 148w
Government shareholding 148w
Land acquisition 145w
Maternity leave 298w
Paternity leave 298w

Miscarriages of justice
Scotland 670–2w

Misleading advertising
Environment protection (15.06.95) 903

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Questions
Archives, Former ministers 25w
Balance of trade 93w
Balance of trade, Tourist industry 90w
Banks, Profitability 83w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 193w, 286w, 478w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, International assistance 477w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ministers 477w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Recognition of states 477w
Capital investment 264–6w
Churchill, Winston LS, Archives 24w, 51w, 94w, 278–9w
Companies, Loans 85w
Company taxation 393w
Consumer credit 395w
Croatia, Recognition of states 478–9w
Engineering industries, Exports 394w
Exchange rates 396w

Mitchell, Mr Austin—continued
Exports 242–6w, 267–8w
Exports, Italy 241–2w
Financial institutions, Wealth 262w
Fishing quotas 648w
Fishing vessels 48–9w
House of Commons, National Lottery 187w
Import penetration 455–6w
Industrial investment 88w, 262–4w
Landing rights 48w
Manufactured exports 454w
Manufactured imports 87–8w
Manufacturing industries 395–6w
Manufacturing industries, Price increases 87w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 93–4w
Manufacturing industries, Profitability 81–4w
Ministers, Broadcasting 25w
National Lottery 198–9w
Overseas investment 263–4w
Overseas trade, India 454–5w
Price increases 89w
Profits 392–4w
Retail price index 515w
Sarajevo, Ethnic groups 477w
Slavonia 477–8w
Slovenia, Armed conflict 286–7w
Tourism, Italy 67w
Trade competitiveness 87w, 372w
Trade promotion, Diplomatic service 455w
Unemployment 102–4w

Moate, Sir Roger
Questions
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 205–6

Molyneaux, Rt Hon James
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 506

Monetary policy
Bank of England 90w

Monopoly
Cinemas 238–9w

Monro, Sir Hector, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Scottish Office
Questions
Brent Spar 214w, 274w
Crofters Commission, Operating costs 272–3w
Crofting, Scotland 170w
Crofting counties agricultural grants scheme, Scotland 273w
Food inspection, Meat 590w
Forestry Commission 472w
Forestry Commission, Blood sports 467w
Lighting, Pollution control 154w
Meat Hygiene Service, Manpower 590w
Sandeels, Scotland 582w
Sandeels, Shetland 580–2w
Scottish Natural Heritage, Members' correspondence 153w
Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Dept, Crofting 273w
Theatres, Scotland 467–9w
Water pollution, Scotland 217w

Morgan, Mr Rhodri
Questions
Armed forces housing, Cardiff 438w
AST Training 579w
AST Training, Redundancy pay 327w
Cardiff Bay barrage, Birds 80w, 414w
EC grants and loans, Urban areas 665w
Family practitioner services, Manpower 36w
Fire services, Wales 341w
Government departments, Expenditure 91w, 339w
GP fundholders, Finance 557–8w
GP fundholders, Legal opinion 665w
GP fundholders, Northern Ireland 23w
GP fundholders, Wales 73w, 81w, 413–4w
Hospital consultants, Leave 289w
Morgan, Mr Rhodri—continued
Mental health services, Wales 664w
NHS, Performance standards 663w
Owner occupied housing, Wales 481
Prescription Pricing Authority, Contracts for services 664w
Privately owned mines, EC grants and loans 604w
University Hospital of Wales 413w
University Hospital of Wales, Road construction 665w
University of Wales Hospital NHS Trust 72–3w, 413w
Urban areas, Property development 80w
Welsh Development Agency 414w
Welsh Development Agency, EC grants and loans 289–90w, 663w
Welsh Development Agency, Urban programme 253–4w
Welsh Health Common Services Authority, Directors 490w
Welsh Health Common Services Authority, Estatecare Group 490–1w, 663w
Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board, Public appointments 569w

Morley, Mr Elliot
Questions
Common fisheries policy 315
Crops, Genetically modified organisms 649w
Export of live animals, Dogs 377–8w
Export of live animals, Ritual slaughter 512–3w
Farmers, Early retirement 566w
Forestry Commission, Blood sports 467w
Genetically modified organisms, Environmental impact assessment 609–10w
Patents, Genetic engineering 577w
Sandeels, Scotland 582w
Sandeels, Shetland 580–2w
Tourism, Wild animals 213w
Transport of animals, EC law 211w

Morocco
Foreign relations 207–8

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc.
Remploy (14.06.95) 714–5
Questions
Handicapped, Personal social services 562–4w, 571w
Personal social services, Northern Ireland 547–8w
Personal social services, Scotland 591w
Social security benefits, Expenditure 538w
Social security benefits, Northern Ireland 547w

Morris, Ms Estelle
Debates etc.
Birmingham City Hospital (12.06.95) 572–3
Family practitioner services (14.06.95) 863–6, 870–2
Questions
Technology colleges, Charities 520w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Baglan Hospital 67–8w

Mortgage defaulters
Repossession orders 383w

Mortgage relief
890
Gloucestershire 890

Mortgages
16–7, 515w
Income support 316–7
Insurance (13.06.95) 612–98
Social security benefits 646w

Moss, Mr Malcolm, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office
Questions
A5, Northern Ireland 354w
Moss, Mr Malcolm—continued
Ambulance services, Early retirement 355w
Compulsorily detained mental patients, Northern Ireland 635w
Dental health, Northern Ireland 464–5w
Dental services, Northern Ireland 356w
Environment protection, Northern Ireland 465w
GP fundholders, Northern Ireland 23w
Grafton Recruitment 346w, 464w
Health service ancillary staff, Northern Ireland 355w
Heart diseases, Northern Ireland 465w
HIV infection, Northern Ireland 635–6w
Homelessness, Northern Ireland 634–5w
Housing, Northern Ireland 210w, 552–4w
Housing policy, Northern Ireland 210w
Income support, Northern Ireland 355w
Local government services, Contracts for services 299–300w
Local government social services, Northern Ireland 542–8w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Northern Ireland 23w
National insurance, Personal injury compensation 351w
NHS numbers, Northern Ireland 351w
Northern Ireland Dept of Health and Social Services, Civil service agencies 362–3w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Consultants 461w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Contracts for services 299w, 301w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Finance 464w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Health service ancillary staff 299–301w, 457–62w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Low pay 300w
Nutrition and health, Northern Ireland 346w
Personal social services, Northern Ireland 547–8w
Public sector housing, Northern Ireland 23w
Rented housing, Northern Ireland 553w
Sinn Fein, Social security recipients 22w
Social security benefits, Northern Ireland 547w
Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, Health service staff 211w

Motor insurance
Convictions 642–3w
Northern Ireland Fire Authority 353w
Police Authority for Northern Ireland 353w

Motor vehicle parts
520w

Motor vehicle registration
Computer applications 401w

Motor vehicle safety
329w, 473w

Motor vehicle testing
Hampshire 276w

Motor vehicle theft
131–2w

Motor vehicles
Dept for Education 520w

Motorcycle industry
Employment opportunities 783–4

Motorcycles
EC law (13.06.95) 699–706

Motorways
41–2w
Noise control 42–3w

Mowlam, Ms Marjorie
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 511–8

Mucous membrane disease
606w

Mudie, Mr George
Questions
Business questions 900–1
Defence industries, Diversification 63w
Electricity supply industry 422–3
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 218w

Mullin, Mr Chris
Questions
Civil proceedings 607w
Civil proceedings, Legal aid 606w
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 306
Miscarriages of justice, Scotland 670–2w
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 794
Police, Disciplinary proceedings 127w
Private prosecutions 527–8w

Murphy, Mr Paul
Questions
International Labour Organisation 209–10
Local government reform, Wales 486

Museums and galleries
Admission charges 199–200w

Music education
290w

Myalgic encephalomyelitis
Northern Ireland 23w

National Advisory Body for Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy
see Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy Confidential Inquiry

National Blood Authority
424w

National Blood Transfusion Service
189w

National Consumer Council
Finance 790–1

National Finance
see Treasury

National Heritage Act 1980
Questions
200–1w

National insurance
Disclosure of information 196w
Northern Ireland 351w
Personal injury compensation 351w
Personal records 116–7w

National insurance contributions
Incapacity benefit 421w

National Insurance Contributions Unit
see Social Security Contributions Agency

National Lottery
198–9w, 279w, 372w, 572w, 592–3
Hospices 677w
House of Commons 187w
Scotland 53–4w
Voluntary organisations 53–4w

National Meat Hygiene Service
see Meat Hygiene Service

National parks
Local government finance 540–1w

National Rivers Authority
609w

National Weights and Measures Laboratory
Performance standards 238w

National Youth Agency
292w

NATO
11, 219w

Nature conservation
488w
Birds 295–6w
Old Denaby 541w
Whales 4–6w, 565w

Naval Support Command
536–7w

Navigational aids
Indonesia 381w

Navy
Armed forces officers 296w
Military exercises 437w
Universities 143w

Nazi war crimes
Gecas, Antonas 665w

Needham, Rt Hon Richard, Minister for Trade
Questions
Balance of trade 453w
Export credit 605w
Export promotion, East Midlands 779–80
Exports 242–6w, 781–2
Hoover, Takeovers 782
Import penetration 453w, 455–6w
Manufactured exports 454w
Overseas trade 456w
Overseas trade, Bangladesh 240w
Overseas trade, India 454–5w
Trade missions, Bangladesh 240w
Trade promotion, Diplomatic service 455w

Negative equity
14, 496–7

Negligence
NHS trusts 360w

Neighbourhood watch schemes
185w

Nelson, Mr Anthony, Minister of State (Economic Secretary) to the Treasury
Questions
Balance of trade 93w
Balance of trade, Tourist industry 90w
Bank of England 396w
Bank of England, Monetary policy 90w
Banks, Profitability 83w
Capital investment 264–6w
Companies, Loans 85w
Complaints against central government, Treasury 86w
Consultants, Treasury 83w
Consumer credit 395w
Contracts for services, Treasury 85w
Council tax, North West region 91–2w
Credit unions 265–6w
Debts, Developing countries 261w
Early retirement, Treasury 632w
Economic situation, Group of Seven 339–40w
Engineering industries, Exports 394w
Exchange rates 396w
Financial institutions, Wealth 262w
Government loans to nationalised industries 395w
Government shareholding 396–8w
Industrial investment 88w, 262–4w
Inflation 91w
Manufactured imports 87–8w
Manufacturing industries 395–6w
Manufacturing industries, Price increases 87w
Manufacturing industries, Productivity 93–4w
Manufacturing industries, Profitability 81–4w
Maternity leave, Treasury 338–9w
Office of Population Censuses and Surveys, Central Statistical Office 92w
Overseas investment 263–4w
Performance standards, Treasury 86–7w
Price increases 89w
"PRODCOM" 261–2w
Rates and rating, Caravan sites 391–2w
Retail price index 84–5w, 515w
Trade competitiveness 87w
Tradepoint Financial Networks 203w

Network SouthEast
Rolling stock 615–6w

Neubert, Sir Michael
Questions
Armed forces, Homosexuality 12
Housing market 630w
Unemployment 579

Neurology
Sussex 307–8w

New earnings survey
327w

Newbury
Road traffic 615w

Newbury bypass
37–8w, 474w

Newcastle upon Tyne
Customs and Excise 85–6w
Official receiver 343–4w

Newham Community Health Services NHS Trust
28–9w

Newsagents
777, 794

Newspaper press
777–8
Wholesale trade 63w, 267w, 577w, 777–8, 794

Newton, Rt Hon Tony, Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 397–404, 411, 417
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 353
Speaker, Leave of absence (08.06.95) 354
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 886
Brent Spar 889
Business statements 321–30, 891–902
Civil disorder, Bradford 888
Group of Seven 886
Inflation 887
Members' staff, Personal pensions 359w
Mortgage relief 890
Mortgage relief, Gloucestershire 890
Orders and regulations 441w
Regional government 888–9
Social security finance 889–90
Trade unions, Industrial relations law 886–7
Unemployment 887–8
Written questions, Parliamentary recess 186–7w

NHS
Accountants 361w
Committee on Standards in Public Life 187w
Contracts for services 360w, 496
Drugs 188–9w
Executives 563w
Performance standards 663w
Private investment 367–8w
Wales 483, 663w

NHS and private practice
332w

NHS charges
Out-patients 308w
Wigan and Leigh Health Services NHS Trust 308w

NHS finance
35–6w, 362w

NHS numbers
Northern Ireland 351w

NHS reform
317–8

NHS trusts
28w
Advertising 32w
Contracts for services 429–30w, 625w
Finance 359w
Health insurance 332w, 359w
Negligence 360w
Nurses 335w
Public appointments 624w
Scotland 674–5w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 906, 931–3, 941
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 313
Japan, Prisoners of war 479w
Overseas trade, Indonesia 779

Nicholson, Mr David
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 131–2
Housing market (13.06.95) 625
Questions
Housing occupancy 248w
Retirement pensions, British residents abroad 269–70w

Nigeria
Arms trade 603w
Democracy 601w
Drug crimes 124w
Prisoners 181w

Night flying
328w

Nimrod aircraft
363w, 533w

Noise control
109w
Motorways 42–3w

Nolan Committee
see Committee on Standards in Public Life

Non-governmental organisations
Overseas aid 568w

Non-teaching staff
Manpower 25w

Norris, Mr Steve, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Transport
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 141, 147–9
Questions
Air safety, Equipment 532w
Air transport, First aid 40w
Aircrew, Conditions of employment 531w
Axle weights 276w
Bus services 44–6w
Bus services, Darlington 45w
Catamarans, Passengers 616w
Children, Lead poisoning 43w
Civil service manpower, Dept of Transport 47w
Civil service redundancies, Dept of Transport 47w
Complaints against central government, Dept of Transport 43–4w
Consultants, Dept of Transport 48w
Crown immunity, Dept of Transport 617w
Cycling 402–3w
Cycling, Crash helmets 474w
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Disclosure of information 39–40w
Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency, Performance standards 615w
Driving licences, Epilepsy 329w
Driving offences 474–5w
Early retirement, Dept of Transport 235–6w
Ferries, Shipping safety 37–8w, 48w, 616w, 621–2w
Fishing vessels 48–9w
Fishing vessels, Shipping registration 236w
Freight transport 329w
Gliders 39w
Helicopters, Greater London 475w
HM Coastguard 620–1w
HM Coastguard, North Sea 618–20w
Landing rights 48w
Lorries, Greater London 616–7w
Lorry drivers, Working hours 401w
M4 49w
Maternity leave, Dept of Transport 275–6w
Motor vehicle registration, Computer applications 401w

Norris, Mr Steve—continued
Motor vehicle safety 329w, 473w
Motor vehicle testing, Hampshire 276w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of Transport 617w
Petrol alternatives, Plant power 38w
Ports, Waste disposal 276–7w, 532w
Public transport, Expenditure 38w
Road accidents, Children 329–30w
Road accidents, Pedestrians 39w
Road Regulation Act 1984, Orders and regulations 531w
Road safety 44w, 329w
Road tax 475w
Road traffic control 46–7w
Roads, Berkshire 400–1w
Sailing boats, Shipping safety 532w
Shipping 622w
Shipping, Waste disposal 277w
Taxis 473w
Traffic areas, Efficiency scrutinies 615w
Traffic areas, Offices 401–2w
Transport policy, Berkshire 400w
Transport supplementary grants 39w

North American Free Trade Agreement
575w

North Korea
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 374–5w

North Sea
Fisheries 274w
HM Coastguard 618–20w
Oil pollution 277w
Pollution 294–5w

North Wales
Special constables 130w

North West region
Council tax 91–2w
Defence industries 148–9w
VAT registration 92w

North Yorkshire
Fire services (14.06.95) 759–66

Northamptonshire
Schools 10w

Northern Ireland
A5 354w
Abortion 15–6w
Civil service recruitment 354–6w
Compulsorily detained mental patients 635w
Dental health 464–5w
Dental services 356w
Early retirement 355w
Economic surveys 356w
Employment agencies 346w
Employment discrimination 353w
Environment protection 465w
Farms 463w
Fiscal policy 878
Foreign investment in UK 17–21w
Free school meals 636–7w
Further education colleges 353–4w, 465–7w
GP fundholders 23w
Health service ancillary staff 355w
Health service staff 211w
Heart diseases 465w
HIV infection 635–6w
Homelessness 634–5w
Hotel and catering industry 351–3w
Housing 210w, 552–4w
Housing policy 210w
Income support 355w
Local government constituencies 22w
Local government services 299–300w
Local government social services 542–8w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis 23w
National insurance 351w
NHS numbers 351w
Nutrition and health 346w
Personal social services 547–8w
Police 354w, 363w
Public appointments 22w
Public sector housing 23w
Rented housing 553w
School closures 635–6w
Social security benefits 547w

Northern Ireland—continued
Young offenders 362w

Northern Ireland Dept of Health and Social Services
Civil service agencies 362–3w

Northern Ireland Electricity
Privatisation 464w

Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(12.06.95) 501–47

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991
Questions
362w

Northern Ireland Fire Authority
Motor insurance 353w

Northern Ireland health and social services boards
Consultants 461w
Contracts for services 299w, 301w
Finance 464w
Health service ancillary staff 299–301w, 457–62w
Low pay 300w

Northern Ireland Office
Cash limits 302w
Civil service manpower 15w
Complaints against central government 550–2w
Consultants 16w
Contracts for services 14–5w
Government information services 637w
Maternity leave 301–2w
Ministerial policy advisors 210w
Paternity leave 301–2w
Performance standards 548–50w
Temporary employment 15w

Northern Ireland Police Authority
see Police Authority for Northern Ireland

Northumbrian Water
Group Lyonnaise des Eaux 240w

Nottinghamshire
Jobseeker's allowance 443w
Radioactive waste disposal 113–4w
Supply teachers 10–1w

Nuclear accidents
Chernobyl 375w

Nuclear Electric
Privatisation 65w

Nuclear materials
Iran 374w

Nuclear non proliferation
13, 139–40w

Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty
219w, 533w
Libyan Arab Republic 374w
North Korea 374–5w

Nuclear power
Privatisation 269w
Public appointments 65–6w
South East Asia 375w

Nuclear power stations
Chernobyl 343w
Decommissioning 269w, 576w

Nuclear safety
Atomic Weapons Establishment 142w

Nuclear shelters
Property transfer 641–2w

Nuclear weapons
141w, 220w

Nuclear weapons tests
141w
Exservicemen 434–6w
Radiation protection 146w
War pensions 196w

Nu-Kote International
79–80w

Nursery schools
Wales 79w

Nurses
NHS trusts 335w
Scotland 470w

Nutrition and health
30–1w, 211–2w
Children 311–2, 565w
Northern Ireland 346w
Scotland 153w
Wales 73w

Oaths
Barristers 439–40w

O'Brien, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 605
Questions
Army in Northern Ireland 138w
Competition law 786–7
GP fundholders, Warwickshire 423w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 185w
Planning permission, Agricultural land 486w
Police Research Group 131w
Prison escapes 181–2w
Prison overcrowding 526w
Prison overcrowding, Performance standards 644w
Prisoners, Crimes of violence 644w
Sudbury Prison, Prison escapes 182–3w
Unemployment, Warwickshire 320

O'Brien, Mr William
Questions
Coal mine closures, Government assistance 442w
Public utilities, Standing charges 792–3

Occupational health
Manpower 561–2w

Office of Gas Supply
Executives 529w
Pay 451–2w, 604w

Office of Population Censuses and Surveys
Central Statistical Office 92w

Offices
Public service 16–7w, 347–52w, 467w
Traffic areas 401–2w

Official engagements
434w
Royal family 602w

Official publications
Design 92–3w

Official receiver
Contracts for services 343w, 369w
Newcastle upon Tyne 343–4w

Official residences
Armed forces officers 363w

Official visits
Journalists 221–2w

O'Hara, Mr Edward
Questions
Meat Hygiene Service 311w

Oil pollution
North Sea 277w

Oil revenues
204w

Old Denaby
Nature conservation 541w

Older workers
588–9
Employment discrimination 443w

Omagh
Civil service manpower 347–50w

One stop shop initiative
789

O'Neill, Mr Martin
Debates etc.
Coal mine closures (07.06.95) 159–62, 167
Questions
Public utilities, Privatisation 781

Onslow, Rt Hon Sir Cranley
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 600

Open government
381w
Wales 488–9

Operating theatres
Private patients 360w

***Oppenheim, Mr Phillip**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment*
Debates etc.
Remploy (14.06.95) 725–8
Questions
Asbestos, Construction materials 114w
AST Training, Redundancy pay 327w
Atomic Weapons Establishment, Industrial health and safety 101–2w
Average earnings, Isle of Wight 444w
Building workers 450w
Conditions of employment 445w
Employment level 98–9w, 654w
Industrial democracy 443–4w
Industrial health and safety, Sewage 104–5w, 450–1w
Industrial injuries 539w
Low incomes 386w
New earnings survey 327w
Part-time employment 96w, 389w
Pay 99–100w
Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992, Sikhs 447–8w
Sheep dipping, Industrial health and safety 101w
Strikes 442w
Temporary employment, Contracts of employment 447w
Temporary employment, East Midlands 442w
Unemployment 99w, 102–4w, 443–4w
Unemployment, Statistics 207–9w, 580–1
Wages councils 446w
Workers' cooperatives 105w

Opposition days
Housing market (13.06.95) 612–98

Optical charges
Eye tests 187w

Oral contraceptives
307w

Oral questions
Church Commissioners 81w
Dept of the Environment 108w

Orders and regulations
441w
Road Regulation Act 1984 531w

Organic farming
311w

Organophosphorous pesticides
649w

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 401, 444, 458–60
Questions
Abortion, Northern Ireland 15–6w
Regional planning and development, South East region 489w
Water and sewerage companies 111w

Out-patients
NHS charges 308w

Ovaries
Cancer 625–6w

Overseas aid
ACP countries 501–2w
Bangladesh 302w
Cameroon 509w

Overseas aid—continued
Deserts 59w, 504w, 566w
Employment opportunities 60w
Family planning 302–3w
Liberia 305w
Madagascar 509w
Non-governmental organisations 568w
Plant power 506–7w
Primary health care 303w
St Helena 507–8w
Southern Africa Development Community 495–6w

Overseas Development
see Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Overseas Development Administration
Contingency reserve 54–5w

Overseas investment
263–4w
Eastern Europe 376w

Overseas loans
Indonesia 55–6w, 381w

Overseas students
Student numbers 415w

Overseas trade
456w, 575w
Bangladesh 240w
India 454–5w
Indonesia 778–9

Overseas workers
Entry clearances 479w

Overtime
Metropolitan Police 279w

Owner occupied housing
487–8w
Wales 481

***Page, Mr Richard**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Trade and Industry*
Debates etc.
Coal mine closures (07.06.95) 162–9
Questions
British Coal Corporation, Loans 267w
Building societies 246–7w
Coal mining, Derelict land 453w
Community businesses 246w
Cooperatives, Government grants 247w
Cooperatives, Local enterprise agencies 247w
Engineering industries, Industrial production 792
Manufacturing industries, Employment opportunities 782–3
Manufacturing industries, West Midlands 791–2
Motorcycle industry, Employment opportunities 783–4
National Lottery 572w
Post offices, Lancashire 63w
Postal deliveries, Greater London 604–5w
Postal services 247w
Privately owned mines, EC grants and loans 604w
Public utilities, Standing charges 792–3
Railway industry 783
Sizewell B, Construction costs 793

***Paice, Mr James**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Employment*
Questions
Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council 655w
Coal mine closures, Government assistance 442w
Employment schemes 583–4, 650–2w
Employment schemes, Yorkshire and Humberside 654w
Employment schemes, Young people 653–4w
Industry training organisations 103w
Investors in people 99–100w, 283w
Job release scheme 653w
Jobshare scheme 590
Labour costs 444w

Paice, Mr James—continued
South Thames Training and Enterprise Council 444w
Take-up of employment 589–90
Technical and vocational education initiative 445–6w
Temporary employment 652–3w
Training, Young people 210w, 448–9w
Training and enterprise councils, Appeals 539w
Training and enterprise councils, Finance 656–9w
Training for work, Dyfed 583
Unemployment 443w
Unemployment, Cumbria 588
Unemployment, Graduates 97–8w, 449w
Vocational education, Student wastage 445w
Vocational guidance, Contracts for services 102w
Youth unemployment 445w

Paisley
Rented housing 172w

Paisley, Rev Ian
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 512, 521–7
Questions
Hotel and catering industry, Further education colleges 351–3w
Rural Cottage Holidays 463w

Palace of Westminster
Fire services 328w

Parachuting
Defence contracts 140w

Paramedical staff
189–90w

Parking
Exhaust emission controls 107w

Parliamentary Boundary Commission for England
see Boundary Commission for England

Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(14.06.95) 799–862

Parliamentary elections
Election expenditure (13.06.95) 607–11

Parliamentary questions
Dept for Education 639w
Dept of Health 562w
Dept of Social Security 538w
Dept of the Environment 541w, 611w
Dept of Transport 617w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 599w
Members' interests 602w
Prime Minister 528w
Welsh Office 659–60w

Parliamentary recess
Written questions 186–7w

Parole
Prisoners 123–4w

Part-time employment
96w, 389w
Wales 405w

Party conferences
Scotland 149w

Passengers
Catamarans 616w

Patchett, Mr Terry
Questions
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 9–10

Patent Office
578w
Performance standards 61w

Patents
Genetic engineering 577w

Paternity leave
Attorney General 272w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 275w
Dept for Education 290w
Dept of Employment 283w
Dept of Health 309w
Dept of National Heritage 278w
Dept of Social Security 270w
Dept of the Environment 294w
Dept of Trade and Industry 268w
Dept of Transport 275–6w
Foreign and Commonwealth Office 287w
Home Office 279w
Lord Chancellor's Dept 271w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 312w
Ministry of Defence 298w
Northern Ireland Office 301–2w
Scottish Office 330w
Treasury 338–9w

Patnick, Sir Irvine
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 912, 917, 927–9
Questions
Civil service, Codes of practice 380w

Patriot missile system
596w

Pawsey, Mr James
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 938–9
Questions
Community health councils 332w
Cycling, Crash helmets 474w
Entry clearances, Adoption 377w
Inflation 630w
Office of Gas Supply, Pay 451–2w
Petroleum exploration licences, EC law 236–7w
Student numbers 415w
Veal, Animal welfare 309w

Peace keeping operations
Angola 221w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 337w, 555w

Peace negotiations
Middle East 218w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
First offenders, West Yorkshire 480w
Housing improvement, Kirklees Borough Council 429w
Young offenders, West Yorkshire 480w

Pedestrians
Road accidents 39w

Pendle
Government grants to local authorities 249–50w

Pension funds
Church of England 556–7w
Contracts for services 496

Pensions
25w

Personal equity plans
628w

Personal income
Social security benefits 420–1w

Personal injury compensation
National insurance 351w

Personal pensions
197–8w
Members' staff 359w

Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992
Questions
Sikhs 447–8w

Personal records
National insurance 116–7w

Personal social services
Handicapped 562–4w, 571w
Northern Ireland 547–8w
Scotland 591w

Personal taxation
628w

Pesticides
EC action 378w

Peterborough
Special areas of conservation 609w

Petrol alternatives
Excise duties 93w, 399w
Plant power 38w

Petroleum exploration
Falkland Islands 248w

Petroleum exploration licences
EC law 236–7w
Environmental impact assessment 237–8w

Pets
Animal welfare 641w

Phenobarbitone
425w

Phillipines
Prostitution 600w

Pickles, Mr Eric
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 28
Questions
Central Office of Information, Performance standards 622–3w
School transport, Essex 14–5

Pickthall, Mr Colin
Questions
Police, Early retirement 526–7w
Roads, Berkshire 400–1w
Teacher training, Cost per student 416w
Transport policy, Berkshire 400w
University finance 593–4

Pike, Mr Peter L
Questions
Aerospace industry 574w
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 312–3
Engineering education 8w
Exhaust emission controls, Parking 107w
Public utilities, Privatisation 780–1
Road safety 44w

Planning inquiries
Electricity Act 1989 61w
Power stations 61w

Planning permission
Agricultural land 486w
City of Westminster 293–4w, 540w
Codes of practice 248–9w
Wales 258w

Plant power
Overseas aid 506–7w
Petrol alternatives 38w

Poland
British embassies 208

Police
Codes of practice 363w
Disciplinary proceedings 126–7w
Divers 258w
Early retirement 127w, 526–7w
Northern Ireland 354w, 363w
Protective clothing 173w, 472w
Scotland 472w

Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
Questions
642w

Police Authority for Northern Ireland
Motor insurance 353w

Police discipline
Disclosure of information 451w

Police national computer
183–5w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 352w
Scotland 152w

Police records
121–2w

Police Research Group
131w

Police Staff College
Ethnic monitoring 523w

Police training
Indonesia 57w, 600w
Race relations 522–4w

Political parties
Finance 495

Political refugees
Appeals 382w
Belgium 382w

Politics and government
Cyprus 203

Pollution
North Sea 294–5w

Pollution control
Lighting 154w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 516–8, 524

Porter, Mr David
Questions
A12 399–400w
Common fisheries policy 374w
Community health councils, Great Yarmouth 360w

Portillo, Rt Hon Michael, Secretary of State for Employment
Questions
Dept of Employment, Cash limits 209–10w
EC Social Charter 581–3, 585
Employment protection 585
International Labour Organisation 94–5w, 585–6
Unemployment 579–80
Unemployment, EC countries 584–5

Portland
Bombs 251w

Ports
Waste disposal 276–7w, 532w

Post offices
Franchising 456w
Lancashire 63w
Scotland 454w
Strathclyde 454w
Supermarkets 456w

Postal deliveries
Greater London 604–5w

Postal services
247w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 599w

Poverty
538w

Powell, Mr Ray
Debates etc.
Oral questions, Points of order (12.06.95) 499–500
Questions
Welsh Assembly 483

Powell, Mr William
Questions
International War Crimes Tribunal 478w
Schools, Northamptonshire 10w

Power stations
Indonesia 567w
Planning inquiries 61w

Pregnant women
Armed forces discharges 5–6

Prentice, Mrs Bridget
Questions
Departmental correspondence 34w

Prentice, Mrs Bridget—continued
Railway network, Southern England 531–2w

Prentice, Mr Gordon
Questions
Archives, Ownership 439w
Cameroon, Rain forests 191–2w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 40w
Churchill, Winston LS, Archives 50–1w, 442w
Citizen's Charter 137w
Coordination and Presentation of Government Policy Ministerial Committee 137w
Council tax, North West region 91–2w
Digital television 51w
Duchy of Lancaster 137w
Duchy of Lancaster, Intestacy 258–9w
Eye tests, Optical charges 187w
Food stocks 1w
Government grants to local authorities, Pendle 249–50w
Honours 345w
Income support, Burnley 270w
Inheritance tax, Lancashire 265w
Legislation 607w
Low flying, Barnoldswick 436w
Lowe Bell Communications 186w
M66, Lighting 50w
Manufacturing industries, Civil servants' secondment 64w
Meat Hygiene Service 310–1w
Mortgages 16–7
NHS trusts 28w
Post offices, Lancashire 63w
Prime minister's questions 271w, 602w
Royal residences, Art works 202w
Share option scheme 628w
Succession 108w
Tax allowances, Art works 340w
Taxation, Lancashire 82w
Vacancies, Barnoldswick 101w
VAT registration, North West region 92w
Windsor Castle, Admission charges 278w
Young offenders, Lancashire 181–2w

Prerogative of mercy
Gilmour, Raymond 675w

Pre-school education
9w, 416w
Education vouchers 9w, 484w, 519–20w
School population 521w
Wales 486–8

Prescott, Rt Hon John
Debates etc.
Oral question time intervention (08.06.95) 320
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 15
Group of Seven 886

Prescription drugs
306–7w, 625w
Epilepsy 336w

Prescription Pricing Authority
Contracts for services 664w

Price increases
89w
Manufacturing industries 87w

Price labelling
EC action (12.06.95) 559

Price Marking Order 1991
Questions
238w

Primarolo, Ms Dawn
Questions
Housing market 882
Incapacity benefit, National insurance contributions 421w

Primary education
Croxteth 638w
Scotland 213w

Primary health care
Bangladesh 303w
Overseas aid 303w

Primates
Import of live animals 510–1w, 647–8w

Prime Minister
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 530w, 601w
Parliamentary questions 528w
Public appointments 528–9w

Prime minister's questions
271w, 602w

Princess Alexandra Hospital
192w

Prison accommodation
Scotland 471–2w

Prison escapes
181–2w
Sudbury Prison 182–3w

Prison overcrowding
177w, 526w
Performance standards 644w
Women's prisons 174w

Prison population
178w
Scotland 671w

Prison sentences
Television licences 643w
Women's prisons 176w

Prison staff
Suicide 119–20w

Prisoners
AIDS 645w
Crimes of violence 644w
Drug crimes 181w
HIV infection 129w, 169–70w, 525–6w
IRA 133w
Maintenance 538–9w
Nigeria 181w
Parole 123–4w
Radio programmes 280w
Scotland 169–70w, 667–70w
Self mutilation 589w
Suicide 589w
Women 123–4w

Prisoners' home leave
Holloway Prison 279–80w
Styal Prison 279–80w

Prisoners' incentives and privileges scheme
342–3w

Prisoners of war
Japan 479w

Prisoners on remand
128w

Prisoners' outings
Mentally disturbed offenders 175–7w

Prisoners' release
Terrorism 602w

Prisons
Disease control 129w

Private education
637w

Private International Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (HL) 1994/95
Debates etc.
(12.06.95) 558

Private investment
NHS 367–8w

Private patients
Operating theatres 360w

Private prosecutions
527–8w

Private sector
Ambulance services 189w
Health service staff 626w
Pay 630w
Teachers' pensions 205–8w

Privately owned mines
EC grants and loans 604w

Privatisation
Blood transfusion services 624w

Privatisation—continued
British Rail 235w, 481–2, 616w, 622w
Dockyards 8–9
Income 266w
Northern Ireland Electricity 464w
Nuclear Electric 65w
Nuclear power 269w
Property Services Agency 613–4w
Public utilities 780–1
Rosyth Dockyard 148w
Scottish Nuclear 214w
Teachers' Pensions Agency 416w

Probation and aftercare
Finance 178–80w

Probation officers
179w
Training 125w

Procurators fiscal
171w

"PRODCOM"
261–2w

Production quotas
Milk 310w

Productivity
British Gas 785
Manufacturing industries 93–4w

Profitability
Banks 83w
Manufacturing industries 81–4w

Property development
City of Westminster 293–4w
Urban areas 80w

Property Services Agency
Privatisation 613–4w

Property transfer
Armed forces deployment 194w
International Planned Parenthood Federation 302w
Nuclear shelters 641–2w

Prosecutions
Financial Services Act 1986 239w
Liverpool 6–7w
Video recordings 482w

Prospectuses
Stocks and shares (14.06.95) 862

Prostitution
Phillipines 600w

Protective clothing
Metropolitan Police 131w
Police 173w, 472w

PSV operators licences
401w

Psychiatric nurses
335w

Public appointments
EC Committee of the Regions 600–1w
Local Government Residuary Body (England) 489w
NHS trusts 624w
Northern Ireland 22w
Nuclear power 65–6w
Prime Minister 528–9w
School Improvement Advisory Group 638–9w
Scottish Office 675w
Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board 569w

Public expenditure
884
Dept of Trade and Industry 788
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 309–10
Wales 482–4

Public investment
433w

Public libraries
277–8w

Public Offers of Securities Regulations 1995
Debates etc.
(14.06.95) 862

Public order policing
Football (08.06.95) 376–96

Public records
Special Operations Executive 222w

Public sector borrowing
884–5

Public sector borrowing requirement
629w, 631–2w

Public sector housing
Defective housing 384–5w
Northern Ireland 23w

Public service
Offices 16–7w, 347–52w, 467w

Public transport
Expenditure 38w

Public utilities
Companies political contributions 784–5
Consumer protection 575–6w
Privatisation 780–1
Redundancy 587
Standing charges 792–3
Welsh language 71w, 256–7w

Publicity
Air pollution 382–3w

Pupils
Epilepsy 415w
Ethnic monitoring 416–7w

Purchase, Mr Ken
Questions
Building societies 246–7w
Community businesses 246w
Companies, Audit 246w
Cooperatives, Government grants 247w
Cooperatives, Local enterprise agencies 247w
Credit unions 265–6w
Local Investment Fund 111w
One stop shop initiative 789
Theatre 522w
Workers' cooperatives 105w

Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre
Performance standards 542w

Queen Mary and Westfield College Bill 1994/95
Debates etc.
3R order read (07.06.95) 192, (08.06.95) 303, (15.06.95) 873

Queen Victoria School
Performance standards 534–5w

Quin, Ms Joyce
Debates etc.
Cyprus (14.06.95) 744–6
European Communities (Definition of Treaties) (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between EC and Russian Federation and Ukraine) Orders (08.06.95) 359–62, 368
Questions
Eastern Europe, Overseas investment 376w
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 202
Music education 290w

Race Electronics
484–5

Race relations
Police training 522–4w

Radiation protection
Nuclear weapons tests 146w

Radio
Indonesia 566–8w

Radio programmes
Bamber, Jeremy 280w
Prisoners 280w

Radioactive waste disposal
Anglesey 490w
Atomic Weapons Establishment 142w

Radioactive waste disposal—continued
AWE Aldermaston 144w
Nottinghamshire 113–4w

RAF Brize Norton
Air transport 437w

RAF Burtonwood
Land acquisition 140w

RAF Newton
595–6w

RAF Rissington
193w

RAF St Athan
University of Wales 146w

RAF Topcliffe
Armed forces training 193–4w

RAF Turnhouse
365–6w

RAF Valley
11
Contracts for services 479–80

RAF Welford
145w

Railtrack
Debts 81–2w

Railway accidents
Cowden 328–9w

Railway closures
276w

Railway fares
474w

Railway industry
783

Railway maintenance
38w

Railway network
Channel tunnel 40w
Manchester Airport 400w
Southern England 531–2w

Railway safety
Rolling stock 615w

Railway timetables
235w

Railway transport
Investment 38–9w, 49–50w

Railway travel
Strathclyde 592w

Rain forests
Cameroon 191–2w

Rank Organisation
Metro Goldwyn Mayer 239w

Rape
642w
Scotland 672w

Rapid deployment forces
Bosnia-Herzegovina 337–8w

Rates and rating
Caravan sites 391–2w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 411–5
Questions
Industrial investment 628w
Unemployment 580

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 631–2, 635, 643, 689
Questions
Council house rents 608w
Housing subsidies 249w
Postal deliveries, Greater London 604–5w

"Realising our Potential White Paper"
379–80w

Recognition of states
Bosnia-Herzegovina 477w

Recognition of states—continued
Croatia 477–9w

Recovery of costs
Legal aid 441w

Recruitment
Civil service 138w, 213w, 255–6w
Iron and steel industry 241w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Questions
Air pollution, Publicity 382–3w
Air safety, Equipment 532w
Armed forces deployment, Greater London 532–3w
Armed forces deployment, Inspections 533w
Art works 372w
Barnsley and Doncaster Training and Enterprise Council 655w
Blood transfusion services, Privatisation 624w
Brodsworth Hall 606w
Churchill, Winston LS, Archives 517w
Employment schemes, Yorkshire and Humberside 654w
Export of live animals, Treaty of Rome 513w
Hedges and ditches 383w
Humphreys, Emma, Homicide 382w
Land pollution 610w
Listed buildings, Yorkshire and Humberside 605–6w
Military vehicles 438w
Nature conservation, Old Denaby 541w
NHS trusts, Public appointments 624w
Non-teaching staff, Manpower 25w
Nuclear shelters, Property transfer 641–2w
Nuclear weapons 141w
RAF Brize Norton, Air transport 437w
RAF Topcliffe, Armed forces training 193–4w
Theatres, Arts Council grants 371w
World Summit for Social Development 502–3w

Redundancy
Direct labour departments 74w, 166w, 169w
Public utilities 587

Redundancy pay
AST Training 327w

Redwood, Rt Hon John, Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Asthma, Medical treatments 257w
Asthma, Wales 257–8w, 570w
Cardiff Bay barrage, Birds 80w, 414w
Civil service, Recruitment 255–6w
Complaints against central government, Welsh Office 71w
Computers in schools, Wales 406w
Consultants, Welsh Office 68w
Councillors, Local government maladministration 75w
Countryside Council for Wales 662w
Crown immunity, Welsh Office 663–4w
Direct labour departments, Finance 73–5w
Direct labour departments, Redundancy 74w
Early retirement, Welsh Office 255w
EC grants and loans, Urban areas 665w
Economic situation, Wales 489
GP fundholders, Wales 73w, 81w, 413–4w
Health authorities, Wales 404w
Health service staff, Expenditure 254w
Health services, Wales 490
Hospital consultants, Leave 289w
Hospital patients, Wales 490
"Lifestyles in Rural Wales" 77–8w
Local government reform, Wales 413w, 489w
Local government services, Competition 75w
Local government services, Contracts for services 491–2w
Local plans, Wales 256w
Low pay, Blaenau Gwent 484
Mental health services, Wales 664w
Ministers' visits abroad, Brussels 70w

Redwood, Rt Hon John—continued
NHS, Performance standards 663w
NHS, Wales 483
Nu-Kote International 79–80w
Owner occupied housing, Wales 481
Parliamentary questions, Welsh Office 659–60w
Part-time employment, Wales 405w
Performance standards, Welsh Office 71–2w
Planning permission, Wales 258w
Prescription Pricing Authority, Contracts for services 664w
Public expenditure, Wales 482–4
Race Electronics 484–5
Rural areas, Unemployment 77w
Rural areas, Wales 255w, 480–1
Sea pollution, Wales 406–7w
TACP Architects, Welsh Office 414–5w
Unemployment, Wales 405w, 480, 484
University Hospital of Wales 413w
University Hospital of Wales, Road construction 665w
University of Wales Hospital NHS Trust 72–3w, 413w
Urban areas, Property development 80w
Welsh Assembly 483, 662–3w
Welsh Development Agency 414w
Welsh Development Agency, Bichan, Roy 358w
Welsh Development Agency, EC grants and loans 289–90w, 663w
Welsh Development Agency, Urban programme 253–4w
Welsh Health Common Services Authority, Directors 490w
Welsh Health Common Services Authority, Estatecare Group 490–1w, 663w
Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board, Public appointments 569w
Welsh language 356–7w
Welsh language, Public utilities 71w
Welsh Office, Languages 570w
Welsh Office, Management consultants 68w

Referenda
Western Sahara 208

Regional arts boards
West Midlands 51–2w

Regional government
888–9

Regional health authorities
Capital investment 360w

Regional planning and development
South East region 489w

Regional selective assistance
573–4w
Scotland 275w, 368w

Reid, Dr John
Questions
EC defence policy 11–2

Religious buildings
Kashmir 217w

Religious freedom
Turkey 376–7w

Remploy
(14.06.95) 707–28

Rendel, Mr David
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 924–7, 947
Questions
Greenham Common, Export of live animals 145w
Local government reform 486w
Newbury bypass 37–8w, 474w
RAF Welford 145w
Road traffic, Newbury 615w

Rent (Northern Ireland) Order 1978
Questions
554w

Rent rebates
Council tenants 249w

Rented housing
Housing construction 487w
Northern Ireland 553w
Paisley 172w

Rents
Housing benefits 115–6w

Repetitive strain injury
Civil servants 593w

Repossession orders
Mortgage defaulters 383w
Wales 409w

Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 1994/95
Debates etc.
1R (12.06.95) 500

Republic of Ireland
Fishing quotas 379w
Territorial waters 148w

Research finance
Systematic biology 432w

Residential care
Elderly 71–2w, 115w, 366–7w
Income support 115w
Scotland 366–7w
Wales 71–2w

Residential care of children
Secure accommodation 34w

Restart programme
280–4w, 386–8w

Retail price index
84–5w, 515w

Retirement pensions
117w
British residents abroad 269–70w

Revenue support grant
Scotland 673–4w

Rich, Marc
Tax evasion 526w

Richards, Mr Rod, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Welsh Office
Questions
Assisted places scheme, Wales 76w
Autism, Wales 357w
Baglan Hospital 67–8w
Dental health, Wales 405w
Dental services, Wales 404–6w
Doctors' list of patients 76w
Drug abuse, Wales 68w
Family doctors, Deprivation indicators 410–3w
Family doctors, Wales 410w
Further education colleges, Finance 76–7w
Grant maintained schools, Clwyd 78w
Grant maintained schools, School population 410w
Grant maintained schools, Wales 78–9w
Handicapped, Personal social services 571w
Heart diseases, Wales 409w
Hospitals, Aberdare 485
Hospitals, Wales 485
Hyperactive Children's Support Group, Government grants to voluntary organisations 490w
Local government social services, Wales 570–2w
Nursery schools, Wales 79w
Nutrition and health, Wales 73w
Open government, Wales 488–9
Pre-school education, Wales 488
Residential care, Elderly 71–2w
Skill shortages, Wales 256w
Special education, Wales 75w
Surgery, Heart diseases 67w
Teachers, Early retirement 76w
Teachers, Manpower 407–8w
Welsh language 659w
Welsh language, Adult education 405w
Welsh language, Public utilities 256–7w

Riddick, Mr Graham
Questions
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 201
Manufacturing industries, Employment opportunities 782–3

Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm, Secretary of State for Defence
Questions
Armed forces, Homosexuality 12
Armed forces reserves 7–8
Army, EC countries 11
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 1–3, 12
Chinook helicopters, Air accidents 597–8w
Defence costs study 7
EC defence policy 11–2
Guided weapons 12
NATO 11
Trident missiles 141w
Weapons, China 9

Right of search
441w

Riot control weapons
121w

Ritual slaughter
Export of live animals 512–3w

River Severn
Bridges 406w

RNAS Portland
194–5w, 364w

RNSD Eaglescliffe
297w

Road accidents
A76 582–5w
Children 329–30w
Johnstone bypass 674w
Pedestrians 39w

Road construction
Scotland 679–81w
University Hospital of Wales 665w

Road damage
Lorries 403–4w

Road haulage licences
402w

Road Regulation Act 1984
Questions
Orders and regulations 531w

Road safety
44w, 329w

Road safety barriers
617–8w

Road tax
475w
Tax rates and bands 90–1w

Road traffic
A38 403w
A76 665–6w
M5 230w
M6 230w
Newbury 615w

Road traffic control
46–7w

Road works
M5 228–34w
M6 228–34w

Roads
Berkshire 400–1w

Robathan, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 127–33, 139
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 514–5, 540
Questions
Armed forces 6–7
Energy conservation, Government departments 114w

Robertson, Mr George
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 225, 228–35
Questions
Councillors, Local government maladministration 167–8w
Direct labour departments, Finance 155–68w
Direct labour departments, Redundancy 166w, 169w
Local government services, Competition 154w, 168–9w

Robertson, Mr Raymond S
Questions
Dounreay 472w
Environmental education, Scotland 274–5w
GP fundholders, Scotland 591–2w
Railway travel, Strathclyde 592w
Scottish Office, Cash limits 217w

Robinson, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 625, 648–52
Questions
New earnings survey 327w
Wages councils 446w

Robinson, Mr Mark
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 908
Questions
Helicopters, Defence procurement 139w

Robinson, Mr Peter
Questions
Fixed penalties, Belfast 210–1w

Roche, Mrs Barbara
Debates etc.
Cyprus (14.06.95) 738, 742–4
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 459–60
Questions
Courts, Seating 271–2w
Cyprus, Politics and government 203
Government buildings 529–30w
Maternity leave, Attorney General 272w
Maternity leave, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster 275w
Maternity leave, Dept for Education 290w
Maternity leave, Dept of Employment 283w
Maternity leave, Dept of Health 309w
Maternity leave, Dept of National Heritage 278w
Maternity leave, Dept of Social Security 270w
Maternity leave, Dept of the Environment 294w
Maternity leave, Dept of Trade and Industry 268w
Maternity leave, Dept of Transport 275–6w
Maternity leave, Foreign and Commonwealth Office 287w
Maternity leave, Home Office 279w
Maternity leave, Lord Chancellor's Dept 271w
Maternity leave, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 312w
Maternity leave, Ministry of Defence 298w
Maternity leave, Northern Ireland Office 301–2w
Maternity leave, Scottish Office 330w
Maternity leave, Treasury 338–9w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Habitual offenders 177w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Hospital staff 36w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Prisoners' outings 175–7w
Mentally disturbed offenders, Special hospitals 118–9w
Metropolitan Police, Protective clothing 131w
Mortgage defaulters, Repossession orders 383w
Pay, Private sector 630w

Roche, Mrs Barbara—continued
Police, Protective clothing 173w
Political refugees, Appeals 382w
Political refugees, Belgium 382w
Prison overcrowding 177w
Prison population 178w
Prison staff, Suicide 119–20w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Body armour 466w
Women's prisons, Prison overcrowding 174w
Women's prisons, Self-mutilation 174w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 601
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 482

Rolling stock
622w
Network SouthEast 615–6w
Railway safety 615w

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Debates etc.
Birmingham City Hospital (12.06.95) 564–9, 574–6
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 344–6
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 802
Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill, 1R (12.06.95) 500
Questions
M6, Road traffic 230w
M6, Road works 228–34w

Rooney, Mr Terry
Questions
Income support, Social security benefits rules 117w
Jobseeker's allowance 102w
Restart programme 280–4w

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc.
Jerusalem (07.06.95) 188–9
Questions
Business questions 329

Ross, Mr William
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 232
Questions
Fiscal policy, Northern Ireland 878
Guided weapons 12
Housing, Northern Ireland 552–4w
Rented housing, Northern Ireland 553w

Rosyth Dockyard
Privatisation 148w

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc.
Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, Rep and 3R (12.06.95) 549, 552
Questions
Business questions 897
Helicopters, Defence procurement 535w
Housing market 882
Mentally ill, Homelessness 426–7w

Royal family
Official engagements 602w

Royal Irish Regiment
Armed forces discharges 7

Royal Life Saving Society
120w

Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust
430w

Royal London Hospital and Associated Community NHS Trust
430–1w

Royal Naval Engineering College
4

Royal residences
Art works 202w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Body armour 466w
Disabled workers (06.06.95) 119–26
Police national computer 352w

Royal William Dockyard Plymouth
Listed buildings 518–9w

Ruddock, Ms Joan
Questions
Air pollution control 383w
Air pollution control, Agriculture 383w
North Sea, Pollution 294–5w

Rumbold, Rt Hon Dame Angela
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 818–21

Rural areas
315–6, 379w
Economic growth 575w
Unemployment 379w
Wales 255w, 480–1

Rural Cottage Holidays
463w

Russia
Armed forces 145w
Ballistic missiles 13–4
EC external relations (08.06.95) 355–75

Rwanda
Armed conflict 194–5, 220w
Arms trade 195
Foreign relations 220w
War crimes 285w

Rwandan International Criminal Tribunal
see International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

Sackville, Mr Tom, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Health
Debates etc.
Birmingham City Hospital (12.06.95) 564, 566, 573–8
Bristol Cancer Help Centre (14.06.95) 756–8
Medical (Professional Performance) Bill, Rep and 3R (12.06.95) 548, 550–3, 557–8
Questions
Accident and emergency departments 332w
Accident and emergency departments, Hospital admissions 31w, 424w
AIDS, Forensic science 425–6w
Ambulance services, Private sector 189w
Baby milks, Sponsorship 426w
Blood 331w
Blood transfusion services, Brentwood 189w, 331w
Blood transfusion services, Privatisation 624w
Cancer, Counselling 559–60w
Cancer, Medical treatments 308w
Cancer, Ovaries 625–6w
Cancer, Young people 560w
Cosmetic surgery 361–2w
Departmental correspondence 34w
Dept of Health, Land acquisition 559–61w
Edgware Hospital 561w
Emergency calls 331w
Health authorities, Land acquisition 561w
Health service staff, Private sector 626w
Health visitors, Manpower 623w
Hepatitis, Haemophilia 307w
HIV infection, Compensation 308–9w
Hospitals, Buckinghamshire 33–4w
Hospitals, Croydon 560w
Hospitals, Performance standards 428w
Infant foods, EC law 565–6w
Infant foods, Health education 426w
Influenza, Vaccination 624w
Intensive care, Yorkshire and Humberside 426w
Land acquisition, Dept of Health 35w
Maternity leave, Dept of Health 309w

Sackville, Mr Tom—continued
National Blood Authority 424w
Neurology, Sussex 307–8w
Newham Community Health Services NHS Trust 28–9w
NHS, Accountants 361w
NHS, Contracts for services 360w
NHS and private practice 332w
NHS finance 35–6w, 362w
NHS trusts 28w
NHS trusts, Advertising 32w
NHS trusts, Contracts for services 429–30w, 625w
NHS trusts, Finance 359w
NHS trusts, Nurses 335w
Nutrition and health 30–1w
Occupational health, Manpower 561–2w
Operating theatres, Private patients 360w
Oral contraceptives 307w
Paramedical staff 189–90w
Parliamentary questions, Dept of Health 562w
Phenobarbitone 425w
Psychiatric nurses 335w
Regional health authorities, Capital investment 360w
Royal Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust 430w
Royal London Hospital and Associated Community NHS Trust 430–1w
Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy Confidential Inquiry 34w

Sailing boats
Shipping safety 532w

St Bartholomew's NHS Trust
33w, 430–1w

St Helena
Overseas aid 507–8w

Salmond, Mr Alex
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 602
Film industry (06.06.95) 25
Questions
Business questions 895–6
Fertility, Medical treatments 367w
Government laboratories, Aberdeen 513w
Locate in Scotland 600w
Nutrition and health, Children 312

Sanctions
Iraq 198

Sandeels
Scotland 582w
Shetland 580–2w

Sarajevo
Ethnic groups 477w

Schengen Agreement
122–3w

Schizophrenia
Community nurses 335w

School administration
Administrative delays 291w

School choice
Wales 290w

School closures
Northern Ireland 635–6w
Scotland 273w

School Improvement Advisory Group
Public appointments 638–9w

School meals
520w
Expenditure 208w
Scotland 590w

School population
Grant maintained schools 410w
Pre-school education 521w

School transport
590–1
Essex 14–5

Schools
Charities 215w
Northamptonshire 10w

Schools—continued
Scotland 215w

Science and technology
432w
Information retrieval 137w

Science and technology policy
379–80w, 623w

Scope of debate
Speaker's rulings and statements (08.06.95) 333

Scotland
Absent parents 117–8w
Administration of justice (07.06.95) 215–94
Aggregate external finance 673–4w
Aids for handicapped 589w
Asthma 150–1w
Charities 275w
Civil service 213w
Complaints against police 469–70w
Crofting 170w
Crofting counties agricultural grants scheme 273w
Dental health 214w
Dental services 215w
Direct labour departments 155–69w
Doctors' list of patients 150w
Domestic energy conservation 149w
Drug abuse 679w
Environmental education 274–5w
Environmental policy 274–5w
Fertility 367w
Fine defaulters 216w, 667–70w
Food inspection 590w
Goats 154w
GP fundholders 591–2w, 665w
Heart diseases 274w
Hospices 677w
Housing associations 165w
Industrial accidents 471w
Lighting 154w
Local government maladministration 167–8w
Local government services 154w, 168–9w
Local government social services 590–2w
Meat Hygiene Service 590w
Medical malpractice 682w
Miscarriages of justice 670–2w
National Lottery 53–4w
NHS trusts 674–5w
Nurses 470w
Nutrition and health 153w
Party conferences 149w
Personal social services 591w
Police 472w
Police national computer 152w
Post offices 454w
Primary education 213w
Prison accommodation 471–2w
Prison population 671w
Prisoners 169–70w, 667–70w
Rape 672w
Regional selective assistance 275w, 368w
Residential care 366–7w
Revenue support grant 673–4w
Road construction 679–81w
Sandeels 582w
School closures 273w
School meals 590w
Schools 215w
Security industry 677–8w
Sewage 681–2w
Sheep premiums 470–1w
Sleeping rough 151–2w
Suckler cow premiums 470–1w
Taxis 672–3w
Theatres 467–9w
Tourism 213w
Water pollution 217w
Young offenders 153–4w, 666–7w

Scott Inquiry
see Arms to Iraq Inquiry

Scottish and Newcastle Breweries
Courage Brewery 65w

Scottish councils
Executives 678w

Scottish courts
672w

Scottish Grand Committee
(12.06.95) 558

Scottish health boards
674–5w

Scottish Homes
172w, 674w
Tenants 272w

Scottish Natural Heritage
Members' correspondence 153w

Scottish Nuclear
Privatisation 214w

Scottish Office
Cash limits 217w
Government shareholding 170w
Maternity leave 330w
Paternity leave 330w
Public appointments 675w

Scottish Office Agriculture and Fisheries Dept
Crofting 273w

"Scottish Strategy for Environmental Education"
274–5w

Sea pollution
Toxic metals 407w
Wales 406–7w

Seas and oceans
Waste disposal 377w

Seating
Courts 271–2w

Secure accommodation
Residential care of children 34w

Secure psychiatric units
Hospital beds 333–4w

Security industry
481w
Scotland 677–8w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 604
Questions
Police discipline, Disclosure of information 451w

Seeds
Anthrax 436w

Sefton Park Palm House
111w

Select committee evidence
Maxwell, Kevin (08.06.95) 333–54

Select committees
Speaker's rulings and statements (08.06.95) 332

Self mutilation
Prisoners 589w

Self-employed
89w, 195–6w, 647w
Income tax 398–9w, 631w

Self-mutilation
Women's prisons 174w

Set-aside schemes
310w
Access to countryside 310w

Sewage
Agricultural land 250w, 378w
Industrial health and safety 104–5w, 108–9w, 450–1w
Scotland 681–2w
Water charges 681–2w

Sex discrimination
Armed forces 6–7

Share option scheme
628w

Shared housing
487w

Shareholders
885

Shaw, Mr David
Debates etc.
Business question time intervention (08.06.95) 330
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 400
Electoral Reform Bill, 1R (13.06.95) 608–11
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 334, 336–7
Members' conduct, Points of order (08.06.95) 332
Questions
Business questions 326
Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency, Information superhighways 137–8w
Electricity supply industry 419–23
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 219w
Science and technology policy 623w

Sheep dipping
514w
Industrial health and safety 101w

Sheep premiums
312w
Scotland 470–1w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Questions
Cancer, Counselling 559–60w
Cancer, Young people 560w
Conservative Party 17–8
Greenbelt 108w
Housing benefits 25w
Housing benefits, Rents 115–6w
Local broadcasting, Cable television 53w
Open government 381w
Shareholders 885
Smoke alarms 128–9w
Student grants 521–2w
University teachers, Average earnings 9–10w
University teachers, Education and industry 484w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 849
Questions
Industrial investment 318
Inflation 879

Shephard, Rt Hon Gillian, Secretary of State for Education
Questions
Dept for Education, Cash limits 205w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Questions
NHS reform 317–8

Shetland
Sandeels 580–2w

Shipbuilding
Environmental Protection (Prescribed Processes and Substances) Regulations 251w

Shipbuilding Intervention Fund
240–1w

Shipping
622w
Waste disposal 277w

Shipping registration
Fishing vessels 236w

Shipping safety
Ferries 37–8w, 48w, 616w, 621–2w
Sailing boats 532w

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc.
Birmingham City Hospital (12.06.95) 560–4, 574, 576–7
Questions
Take-up of employment 590

Sikhs
Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 447–8w

Simpson, Mr Alan
Questions
Alternative energy 268–9w
Defence research, USA 297–8w
Educational assessment 10–1w
Educational assessment, Supply teachers 10–1w
Government grants 11w
Jobseeker's allowance, Nottinghamshire 443w
Nuclear power stations, Decommissioning 576w

Single regeneration budget
613w

Sinn Fein
Social security recipients 22w

Sites of special scientific interest
Thorne Moors 540w

Sixth form education
Tuition fees 638w

Sizewell B
Construction costs 793

Skill shortages
209w
Wales 256w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 603
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 223–4
Inquiries, Points of order (06.06.95) 29
Oral question time intervention (06.06.95) 16
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 807
Remploy (14.06.95) 720–2, 727
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 2
British Manufacturing and Research Company 874
Business questions 897–8
Citizen's Charter 492
Common agricultural policy 309
Sizewell B, Construction costs 793
Unemployment 443w

Slaughterhouses
512w
Wales 289w

Slavonia
477–8w

Sleeping rough
Scotland 151–2w

Slovenia
Armed conflict 286–7w

Small businesses
873–4

Smith, Mr Andrew
Questions
Economic forecasting 432–3w

Smith, Mr Chris
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 21–2
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 341
Questions
Government buildings, Greater London 44w

Smith, Sir Dudley
Questions
Temporary employment, Contracts of employment 447w

Smith, Mr Llew
Debates etc.
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Points of order (06.06.95) 29

Smith, Mr Llew—continued
Questions
Alternative energy 576w
Anthrax, Seeds 436w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Disclosure of information 565w
Chernobyl, EC aid 375w
Countryside Council for Wales, Finance 409w
EC Development Council 191w
EC Energy Council 64–5w
EC Health Council 187–8w
House condition survey, Wales 489–90w
Iran, Nuclear materials 374w
Libyan Arab Republic, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 374w
Low pay, Blaenau Gwent 484
North Korea, Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 374–5w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 533w
Nuclear power stations, Chernobyl 343w
Nuclear weapons 141w, 220w
Nuclear weapons tests 141w
Seas and oceans, Waste disposal 377w
South East Asia, Nuclear power 375w
Toxic metals, Sea pollution 407w
Treaty on European Union 555w

Smith, Mr Tim
Questions
Compliance cost assessments 452–3w

Smoke alarms
128–9w

Smyth, Rev Martin
Questions
Armed forces discharges, Royal Irish Regiment 7
Civil service, Recruitment 138w, 213w, 255–6w
Civil service recruitment, Northern Ireland 354–6w
Economic and monetary union 206–7
Public service, Offices 467w
Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy Confidential Inquiry 34w

Soames, Mr Nicholas, Minister of State for Defence
Questions
Air force bases, Export of live animals 192w
Anthrax, Seeds 436w
Armed forces 6–7
Armed forces, Defence research 365w
Armed forces, Homosexuality 6
Armed forces, Russia 145w
Armed forces, Sex discrimination 6–7
Armed forces casualties 595w
Armed forces casualties, Compensation 192w, 598w
Armed forces casualties, Hospitals 338w
Armed forces deployment, Bovington 140–1w
Armed forces deployment, Greater London 532–3w
Armed forces deployment, Inspections 533w
Armed forces deployment, Property transfer 194w
Armed forces deployment, Wales 10
Armed forces discharges, Pregnant women 5–6
Armed forces discharges, Royal Irish Regiment 7
Armed forces housing 10, 365w, 438w
Armed forces housing, Cardiff 438w
Armed forces housing, Empty housing 9–10
Armed forces officers, Ethnic minorities 364–5w
Armed forces officers, Official residences 363w
Armed forces training 595w
Armed forces training, Mines 437w
Army in Northern Ireland 138w
Ballistic missiles, Russia 13–4
Boscombe Down, Manpower 145–6w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 139w, 193w

Soames, Mr Nicholas—continued
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 139w, 337–8w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Peace keeping operations 337w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rapid deployment forces 337–8w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, USA 337w
Chinook helicopters, Air accidents 598w
Clyde submarine base 366w
Dartmouth royal regatta, Warships 192–3w, 438–9w
Defence Animal Centre, Performance standards 534w
Defence costs study 366w
Defence land, Land acquisition 537w
Defence Postal and Courier Services, Performance standards 534w
Greenham Common, Export of live animals 145w
Greenpeace, AWE Aldermaston 144w
Gulf War syndrome 146w
HMS Royal Arthur, Empty housing 436w
Land acquisition, Ministry of Defence 145w
Low flying, Barnoldswick 436w
Military aircraft, Low flying 537w
Military aircraft, West Cumbria 193w
Military exercises 437–8w
Military exercises, Navy 437w
Military vehicles 438w
Ministry of Defence, Bath 297w
Naval Support Command 536–7w
Navy, Armed forces officers 296w
Navy, Universities 143w
Nimrod aircraft 533w
Nuclear non proliferation 13, 139–40w
Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty 533w
Nuclear weapons 141w
Nuclear weapons tests 141w
Nuclear weapons tests, Exservicemen 434–6w
Nuclear weapons tests, Radiation protection 146w
Princess Alexandra Hospital 192w
Queen Victoria School, Performance standards 534–5w
RAF Brize Norton, Air transport 437w
RAF Burtonwood, Land acquisition 140w
RAF Newton 595–6w
RAF Rissington 193w
RAF Topcliffe, Armed forces training 193–4w
RAF Turnhouse 365–6w
RAF Valley 11
RAF Welford 145w
RNAS Portland 194–5w, 364w
RNSD Eaglescliffe 297w
Trident 10–1
Trident missiles 144w
UN Protection Force, Bosnia-Herzegovina 139w
University of Wales, RAF St Athan 146w
Weapons, Air transport 143w

Social security appeals
Disability living allowance 419w

Social security benefits
Expenditure 538w
Lone parents 195w
Mortgages 646w
Northern Ireland 547w
Personal income 420–1w
Student grants 483w

Social security benefits rules
Housing benefits 420w
Income support 117w

Social security claims
Home visits 114–5w

Social Security Contributions Agency
Inland Revenue 516w

Social security finance
493–4w, 889–90
EC countries 421w

Social security payments
196–7w
Automation 116w

Social security recipients
Sinn Fein 22w

Soley, Mr Clive
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 518, 537–9
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 810–1, 821–5, 861
Questions
Armed forces housing 438w
Brent Spar 65w, 214w
EC defence policy 206
EC Finance Council 874–5
Health service ancillary staff, Northern Ireland 355w
Local government services, Contracts for services 299–300w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Consultants 461w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Contracts for services 299w, 301w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Health service ancillary staff 299–301w, 457–62w
Northern Ireland health and social services boards, Low pay 300w
Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981, Health service staff 211w

Sonar
Trident submarines 364w

South Asia
(09.06.95) 471–8

South Down
Water distribution 12–4w

South East Asia
Nuclear power 375w

South East region
Regional planning and development 489w
Taxpayers 266–7w

South Hams
Local government reform 611w

South Thames Training and Enterprise Council
444w

Southern Africa Development Community
Bilateral aid 497–500w
EC aid 496–7w
Overseas aid 495–6w

Southern England
Railway network 531–2w

Southwark
Health service staff 430w

Southwark Borough Council
Manpower 488w

Space technology
576w

Spain
Agricultural subsidies 313–4
Fisheries 6w
Fishery protection 513–4w

Speaker
Leave of absence (08.06.95) 354

Speaker and deputies, For rulings and statements see separate heading
Speaker's rulings and statements
Debates etc.
(09.06.95) 408–9
Amendments and new clauses (07.06.95) 216, 255, 257, 266–7, 273, 276–7, (08.06.95) 355, (13.06.95) 612
Conduct of proceedings (06.06.95) 32, 66, 70, 76, 85, 88, (07.06.95) 224, 237, 246, 248, 289, 293, (08.06.95) 322, 329–30, 385, (09.06.95) 444, 470, (12.06.95) 510, 526, 559, 564, 570, (13.06.95) 582, 592, 594, 611, 617, (14.06.95) 728, 750, 755,

Speaker and deputies—continued
766, 792, 814, 824, 854, (15.06.95) 887–8, 896, 907, 909, 921, 936, 942
Orders and regulations motions (07.06.95) 211, (12.06.95) 558, (14.06.95) 862
Points of order (06.06.95) 29, (08.06.95) 331–2, (09.06.95) 408–9, (12.06.95) 499–500, 559, (14.06.95) 795, 861, (15.06.95) 903, 914, 917

Speaker's rulings and statements
Scope of debate (08.06.95) 333
Select committees (08.06.95) 332
Ten minutes rule (15.06.95) 904

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 133–7
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 445
Stratford School (14.06.95) 769
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 235w
Gas supply industry 573w
Green papers 345w
Helicopters, Greater London 475w
National Blood Authority 424w
Newham Community Health Services NHS Trust 28–9w
NHS finance 35–6w
Pesticides, EC action 378w
Pre-school education, Education vouchers 9w, 519–20w
Probation officers, Training 125w
Railway timetables 235w
Royal London Hospital and Associated Community NHS Trust 430–1w
Treaty on European Union 196

Special areas of conservation
608–9w
Irish Sea 21–2w
Peterborough 609w
Wales 660w

Special constables
North Wales 130w

Special education
Epilepsy 484–5w
Lancashire 484w
Wales 75w

Special hospitals
Mentally disturbed offenders 118–9w

Special Operations Executive
Public records 222w

Special protection areas
Inverclyde enterprise zone 216w

Speed, Sir Keith
Questions
Rolling stock, Railway safety 615w

Spellar, Mr John
Questions
Asbestos, Construction materials 114w
Building industry, Dept of Transport 404w
Hydrocarbon oil duties 91w
Network SouthEast, Rolling stock 615–6w
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 777
St Bartholomew's NHS Trust 33w

Spink, Dr Robert
Questions
Coordination and Presentation of Government Policy Ministerial Committee 497–8
Executives, Pay 186w
Foreign investment in UK 574–5w
Homicide, Habitual offenders 181w
Housing market 882–3
Office of Gas Supply, Executives 529w
Prisoners' release, Terrorism 602w

Sponsorship
Baby milks 426w

Spring, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 424, 438–42
Questions
Chartermark scheme 380–1w
Defence equipment 139w
Food consumption, Buy British 303
Manufacturing industries, Deregulation initiative 785
Older workers 588–9
Personal taxation 628w

Sproat, Mr Iain, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of National Heritage
Debates etc.
Shalfleet bridge (07.06.95) 300–2
Questions
Public libraries 277–8w
Windsor Castle, Admission charges 278w

Squire, Ms Rachel
Questions
Rosyth Dockyard, Privatisation 148w
Science and technology, Information retrieval 137w

Squire, Mr Robin, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept for Education
Questions
Assisted places scheme 7–8w
Chinley School Derbyshire 519w
Free school meals 9w, 291–2w
Grants for education support and training 10w, 292w
Music education 290w
Pre-school education 416w
Pre-school education, Education vouchers 9w
Primary education, Croxteth 638w
Private education 637w
School administration, Administrative delays 291w
School choice, Wales 290w
School meals 520w
School meals, Expenditure 208w
Schools, Northamptonshire 10w
Sixth form education, Tuition fees 638w
Teacher training, Cost per student 416w
Teachers, Early retirement 8w
Teachers, Pay 417–9w, 521w
Teachers' pensions, Private sector 205–8w
Teachers' Pensions Agency, Privatisation 416w

Standard of living
Elderly 25w

Standards in Public Life Select Committee
(06.06.95) 118, (09.06.95) 470, 494, 623w, (13.06.95) 698

Standards of Conduct in Public Office Standing Committee
see Committee on Standards in Public Life

Standing charges
Public utilities 792–3

Statistics
Unemployment 207–9w, 580–1

Steel, Rt Hon Sir David
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 604
Questions
Bangladesh, Grameen Bank 190w
Goats, Scotland 154w
Newspaper press, Wholesale trade 577w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 470–1w
Western Sahara, Referenda 208

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 909
Cycling (07.06.95) 130–1, 134, 142–4
Questions
A38, Road traffic 403w
British Telecom, Members' correspondence 605w
Cosmetics, Animal experiments 605w
Dartmouth royal regatta, Warships 192–3w, 438–9w

Steen, Mr Anthony—continued
Fisheries, Spain 6w
Industrial disablement benefits, Automated credit transfer 492–3w
Judgments 7w
Local government reform, South Hams 611w
Official publications, Design 92–3w

Steinberg, Mr Gerry
Questions
Grants for education support and training 10w

Step-parents
Adoption 626–7w

Stern, Mr Michael
Questions
Naval Support Command 536–7w

Stevenson, Mr George
Debates etc.
Coal mine closures (07.06.95) 150–3, 158, 161, 164–5, 167–8
Questions
Business questions 894
Common agricultural policy 308

Stewart, William
Ministerial policy advisors 491

Stillbirths and Deaths in Infancy Confidential Inquiry
34w

Stocks and shares
Prospectuses (14.06.95) 862

Strang, Dr Gavin
Questions
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 313
Environmentally sensitive areas, Wales 68–70w
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 307
Fishery protection, Spain 513–4w
Fishing vessels, Shipping registration 236w
International Labour Organisation 95w

Stratford School
(14.06.95) 767–76

Strathclyde
Post offices 454w
Railway travel 592w

Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority
149–50w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 808–18
Questions
Immigration 121w
Metropolitan Police, Overtime 279w
Schengen Agreement 122–3w

Streeter, Mr Gary
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 674
Questions
Hackney Borough Council 593
Navy, Armed forces officers 296w

Strike ballots
Codes of practice (07.06.95) 294

Strikes
442w

Student grants
483–4w, 521–2w
Dependants 483w
Social security benefits 483w

Student loans
Debt collection 483w

Student numbers
415w
Overseas students 415w

Student wastage
Vocational education 445w

Students
Housing benefits 644w
Jobseeker's allowance 656w

Styal Prison
123–5w
Prisoners' home leave 279–80w

Subsidiary companies
Church Commissioners 555–6w

Succession
108w

Suckler cow premiums
Scotland 470–1w

Sudan
27w

Sudbury Prison
Prison escapes 182–3w

Suicide
Mentally ill 306w
Prison staff 119–20w
Prisoners 589w

Sumberg, Mr David
Questions
Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Performance standards 542w

Supermarkets
Post offices 456w

Supply teachers
Educational assessment 10–1w
Nottinghamshire 10–1w

Surgery
Heart diseases 67w
Wales 67w

"Survey of Derelict Land in England 1993"
327–8w

Sussex
Neurology 307–8w

Sutcliffe, Mr Gerry
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 509
Questions
Business questions 328

Sweeney, Mr Walter
Questions
Local government services, Contracts for services 491–2w
NHS, Wales 483
Sea pollution, Wales 406–7w
Welsh Development Agency, Bichan, Roy 358w
Welsh language 356–7w

Sykes, Mr John
Debates etc.
Fire services, North Yorkshire (14.06.95) 759–63
Questions
British Fluoridation Society 34–5w
Residential care of children, Secure accommodation 34w

Systematic biology
431–2w
Research finance 432w

TACP Architects
Welsh Office 414–5w

Take-home pay
420–1w, 434w

Takeovers
Hoover 782

Take-up of employment
589–90
Training 97–8w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 912

Tapsell, Sir Peter—continued
Questions
Official engagements 434w

Tax allowances
Art works 340w
Income tax 205–6w

Tax assessment
Capital gains tax 515w

Tax burden
Low incomes 516w

Tax evasion
Rich, Marc 526w

Tax rates and bands
Inheritance tax 266w
Road tax 90–1w

Tax yields
Alcoholic drinks duties 88–9w
Betting and gaming duties 90w

Taxation
Computer privacy 395w
Lancashire 82w

Taxis
473w
Airports 672–3w
Scotland 672–3w
Touting 135–6w

Taxpayers
South East region 266–7w

Taylor, Mrs Ann
Questions
Business statements 321, 891–902
Political parties, Finance 495
Standards in Public Life Select Committee 623w

Taylor, Mr Ian, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Dept of Trade and Industry
Questions
Arms trade, Indonesia 779
Arms trade, Nigeria 603w
Arms trade, West Africa 603w
Billing, Company liquidations 790
British Telecom, Members' correspondence 605w
Chemical weapons, Indonesia 579w
Complaints against central government, Dept of Trade and Industry 62w
Copyright, EC law 368w
Departmental correspondence, Dept of Trade and Industry 243–5w
Dept of Trade and Industry, Billing 789–90
Electric shock equipment 603w
Export credit, Indonesia 239w
Exports 242–4w, 267–8w
Exports, Italy 241–2w
Intellectual property, Educational aid 453w
Maternity leave, Dept of Trade and Industry 268w
North American Free Trade Agreement 575w
Overseas trade 575w
Overseas trade, Indonesia 778–9
Patent Office 578w
Patents, Genetic engineering 577w
Space technology 576w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc.
Cyprus (14.06.95) 732, 735, 738–41
Questions
Compulsorily detained mental patients, Northern Ireland 635w
Council for Catholic Maintained Schools 635w
HIV infection, Northern Ireland 635–6w
Homelessness, Northern Ireland 634–5w
Myalgic encephalomyelitis, Northern Ireland 23w
Police Authority for Northern Ireland, Motor insurance 353w
Public sector housing, Northern Ireland 23w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David—continued
Republic of Ireland, Territorial waters 148w

Taylor, Mr John M, Parliamentary Secretary, Lord Chancellor's Dept
Questions
Adoption, Step-parents 626–7w
Archives, Ownership 439w
Barristers, Oaths 439–40w
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Cash limits 186w
Civil Court Procedures Review 608w
Civil proceedings 607w
Civil proceedings, Legal aid 606w
Court Service Agency 607w
Courts, Seating 271–2w
Courts' Charter, Magistrates' courts 607w
Judgments 7w
Legal aid, Bacchus, Kasim Mohamed 440–1w
Legal aid, Fraud 519w
Legal aid, Recovery of costs 441w
Legal Services Ombudsman 439w
Legislation 607w
Maternity leave, Lord Chancellor's Dept 271w
Prosecutions, Liverpool 6–7w
Right of search 441w

Taylor, Mr Matthew
Questions
International Conference on the Protection of the North Sea 111w
Special areas of conservation 608–9w
Special areas of conservation, Peterborough 609w

Taylor, Sir Teddy
Debates etc.
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 801
Questions
Business questions 896
Economic and monetary union 630–1w
Identity cards 125w
Regional selective assistance 573–4w

Teacher training
Cost per student 416w
Handicapped pupils 415w

Teachers
Child abuse 8–9w
Early retirement 8w, 76w
Manpower 407–8w
Pay 417–9w, 521w
Wales 76w, 407–8w

Teachers' pensions
Private sector 205–8w

Teachers' Pensions Agency
Privatisation 416w

Technical and vocational education initiative
445–6w

Technology colleges
Charities 520w

Technology foresight programme
380w, 491–2

Television
Television programmes 53w

Television licences
Prison sentences 643w

Television programmes
Television 53w

Temazepam
624–5w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Questions
National Rivers Authority 609w

Temporary accommodation
542w

Temporary employment
652–3w
Contracts of employment 447w
East Midlands 442w

Temporary employment—continued
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 324–6w
Northern Ireland Office 15w

Ten minutes rule
Speaker's rulings and statements (15.06.95) 904

Tenant farmers
Agricultural land 304–5

Tenants
Scottish Homes 272w

Territorial waters
Republic of Ireland 148w

Terrorism
Prisoners' release 602w

Thatcher, RtHonBaroness
593

Theatre
522w

Theatres
52w
Access to buildings 201w
Arts Council grants 371w
Ilfracombe 112w
Scotland 467–9w

Thomason, Mr Roy
Questions
Company accounts 60w
Patent Office, Performance standards 61w
Take-home pay 434w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 904, 918
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 399, 408, 431–4
Ten minute rule, Points of order (09.06.95) 408
Questions
Dept of Trade and Industry, MINIS 368w
Police, Codes of practice 363w
Unemployment, EC countries 584–5

Thorne Moors
Sites of special scientific interest 540w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc.
Remploy (14.06.95) 710–4
Questions
Business questions 322–3
Defence industries 140w
EC Social Charter 581–2
Overseas trade 456w

Thurrock
Cable television 278w

Tibet
Family planning 304w
Human rights 220w, 480w

Timms, Mr Stephen
Debates etc.
Drug abuse (09.06.95) 403, 449–52
Stratford School (14.06.95) 767–70, 772
Questions
Dental services 330–1w
Mathematics education 12w
Tower Hamlets 558–60w

Tipping, Mr Paddy
Questions
Disability living allowance, Social security appeals 419w
Export promotion, East Midlands 780
Forestry Commission 472w
Inland Revenue, Lincoln 345w
Local government reform, Berkshire 384w
Probation and aftercare, Finance 178–80w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nottinghamshire 113–4w

Tobacco
Animal experiments 524–5w
European Commission 2w

"Tomorrows Job"
Criminal investigation 136w, 480–1w

Touhig, Mr Don
Debates etc.
Class sizes, Points of order (06.06.95) 29
Questions
Business questions 330
Mines 12–3
Patent Office 578w

Tourism
Italy 67w
Scotland 213w
Wild animals 213w

Tourist industry
Balance of trade 90w

Touting
Taxis 135–6w

Tower Hamlets
558–60w

Town and country planning
Wales 490w

Townend, Mr John
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed forces deployment 200–1
Inflation 876–7

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc.
Jerusalem (07.06.95) 186–7
Questions
Electricity supply industry 422
Fish conservation 310w
Iraq, Arms embargoes 198–9

Toxic metals
Sea pollution 407w

Tracey, Mr Richard
Debates etc.
Council Tax Limitation (England) (Maximum Amounts) Order (15.06.95) 908, 916, 938
Questions
Business questions 902

Trade competitiveness
87w, 372w

Trade missions
Bangladesh 240w
China 572w

Trade promotion
Diplomatic service 197, 208, 455w

Trade unions
Industrial relations law 886–7

Tradepoint Financial Networks
203w

Traffic areas
Efficiency scrutinies 615w
Offices 401–2w

Training
Ayrshire 215w
Probation officers 125w
Take-up of employment 97–8w
Young people 210w, 448–9w

Training and enterprise councils
Appeals 539w
Finance 656–9w

Training for work
Dyfed 583

Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 1981
Questions
Health service staff 211w

Translation services
House of Commons debates 23w

Transport of animals
EC law 211w

Transport policy
Berkshire 400w

Transport supplementary grants
39w

Treasury
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 516–7w
Cash limits 203w
Complaints against central government 86w
Consultants 83w
Contracts for services 85w
Early retirement 632w
Maternity leave 338–9w
Paternity leave 338–9w
Performance standards 86–7w

Treasury Solicitor's Dept
Cash limits 185w

Treaty of Rome
Export of live animals 513w

Treaty on European Union
196, 554–5w

Tredinnick, Mr David
Questions
Motorcycle industry, Employment opportunities 783–4
Temporary employment, East Midlands 442w

Trend, Mr Michael
Questions
Boundary Commission for England 125w
Dept of the Environment, Cash limits 250–1w
Tibet, Human rights 220w
Voluntary work 126w

Trident
10–1

Trident missiles
141w, 144w

Trident submarines
363w
Sonar 364w

Trimble, Mr David
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 527–31
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Disabled workers (06.06.95) 119–23
Questions
British residents abroad 219w
Customs and Excise, Unfair dismissal 394w
Gibraltar 204–5
Grafton Recruitment 346w, 464w
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1991 362w
Northern Ireland Office, Government information services 637w
Public service, Offices 347–52w
School closures, Northern Ireland 635–6w

Tuition fees
Sixth form education 638w

Turkey
Religious freedom 376–7w

Turner, Mr Dennis
Questions
Manufacturing industries, West Midlands 791–2

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Cyprus, Politics and government 203
Dept of Trade and Industry, Cash limits 238w
Food exports, Export promotion 311–2w
National Weights and Measures Laboratory, Performance standards 238w
Price Marking Order 1991 238w

Tyler, Mr Paul
Debates etc.
Cycling (07.06.95) 139–42
Questions
Environment protection, Countryside 488w
Food consumption, Buy British 303–4

Tyler, Mr Paul—continued
Research, Environment protection 488w
Sheep dipping 514w

UK companies abroad
576w

Ukraine
EC external relations (08.06.95) 355–75

UN Commission on Sustainable Development
614–5w

UN Conference on Women
220w, 287w

UN Convention on Biological Diversity
486–7w

UN Environment Programme
614–5w

UN Population Fund
Finance 303w
UK contributions 302w

UN Protection Force
Bosnia-Herzegovina 139w

UN Tribunal on War Crimes
see International War Crimes Tribunal

Unemployment
99w, 102–4w, 319, 443–4w, 579–80, 887–8
Alyn and Deeside 480
Cumbria 588
EC countries 584–5
Economic growth 881–2
Graduates 97–8w, 449w
Rural areas 77w
Statistics 207–9w, 580–1
Wales 77w, 405w, 480, 484
Warwickshire 320

Unfair dismissal
Customs and Excise 394w

Uniform business rate
106w

United Nations
209
USA 209–10

Universities
Navy 143w

University finance
593–4

University Hospital of Wales
413w
Road construction 665w

University of Wales
RAF St Athan 146w

University of Wales Hospital NHS Trust
72–3w, 413w

University teachers
Average earnings 9–10w
Education and industry 484w

Urban areas
EC grants and loans 665w
Property development 80w
Wales 80w

Urban development corporations
384w
English Heritage 517–8w

Urban programme
Welsh Development Agency 253–4w

Urban railways
Government grants to local authorities 531w

USA
Air transport 228w
Bosnia-Herzegovina 337w
Defence research 297–8w
International Fund for Ireland 354w
United Nations 209–10

Vacancies
Age discrimination 390–1w
Barnoldswick 101w
Family doctors 361w

Vacancies—continued
Job centres 390–1w

Vaccination
Influenza 624w

Value Added Tax (Input Tax) (Amendment) (No 2) Order 1995
Debates etc.
(12.06.95) 558

VAT
392w, 433w, 627w
Energy prices 392w

VAT registration
North West region 92w

VAT zero rating
Home care services 515–6w

Vaz, Mr Keith
Questions
Courts' Charter, Magistrates' courts 607w

Veal
Animal welfare 309w

Veterinary drugs
Antibiotics 431w
Livestock 509–10w

Video recordings
Prosecutions 482w

Viggers, Mr Peter
Questions
Unemployment 443w

Viral haemorrhagic disease
32w

Viruses
Immigration officers 120w

Viticulture
Agricultural subsidies 514w

VJ day
24w

Vocational education
Student wastage 445w

Vocational guidance
Contracts for services 102w

Voluntary organisations
National Lottery 53–4w

Voluntary work
126w

Wages councils
446w

Wakefield
Greenbelt 109–10w

Waldegrave, William
Arms to Iraq Inquiry 650w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural policy 310w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Disclosure of information 565w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 650w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Waldegrave, William 650w
Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 327w
Central Science Laboratory 1–3w
Civil service manpower, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 317–21w
Common agricultural policy 307–9
Common agricultural policy, Costs 312w
Common agricultural policy, Fraud 312–3
Consultants, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 312–3w
Contracts for services, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 313–7w
Early retirement, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 321–4w
EC Agriculture Council 3w
Export of live animals, Animal welfare 306–7
Fishery protection, Spain 513–4w
Government laboratories, Aberdeen 513w

Waldegrave, Rt Hon William—continued
Milk, Production quotas 310w
Milk Marque 309–10w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Ministerial duties 309
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Public expenditure 309–10
Organic farming 311w
Rural areas 315–6
Temporary employment, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food 324–6w
Tenant farmers, Agricultural land 304–5

Walden, Mr George
Debates etc.
Housing market (13.06.95) 652–6, 661, 691

Wales
Armed forces deployment 10
Assisted places scheme 76w
Asthma 257–8w, 570w
Autism 357w
Car ownership 490w
Civil service 255–6w
Coastal erosion 569–70w
Computers in schools 406w
Contracts for services 491–2w
Councillors' allowances 486
Countryside stewardship scheme 660–1w
Dental health 405w
Dental services 404–6w
Direct labour departments 73–5w
Drug abuse 68w
EC grants and loans 665w
Economic situation 489
Elderly 569w
Environment protection 661w
Environmentally sensitive areas 68–70w
Export of live animals 357w
Family doctors 410–3w
Farms 358w
Fire services 341w, 486
Foreign investment in UK 490–1
Further education colleges 76–7w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 406w
GP fundholders 73w, 81w, 413–4w
Grant maintained schools 78–9w, 410w
Grasslands 661w
Handicapped 571w
Health authorities 404w
Health service staff 254w
Health services 490
Heart diseases 409w
Homelessness 569w
Hospital consultants 289w
Hospital patients 490
Hospitals 485
House condition survey 489–90w
Housing construction 569w
Land pollution 255w
Local government maladministration 75w
Local government reform 413w, 486–7, 489w
Local government services 75w
Local government social services 570–2w
Local plans 256w
Mental health services 664w
Military aircraft 537w
NHS 483, 663w
Nursery schools 79w
Nutrition and health 73w
Open government 488–9
Owner occupied housing 481
Part-time employment 405w
Planning permission 258w
Pre-school education 486–8
Public expenditure 482–4
Repossession orders 409w
Residential care 71–2w
Rural areas 255w, 480–1
School choice 290w
Sea pollution 406–7w
Skill shortages 256w
Slaughterhouses 289w
Special areas of conservation 660w
Special education 75w
Surgery 67w
Teachers 76w, 407–8w
Town and country planning 490w

Wales—continued
Unemployment 77w, 405w, 480, 484
Urban areas 80w
Young offenders 127w
Young people 569w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 227, 231, 237
Questions
Armed forces reserves 7–8
Chinook helicopters, Air accidents 597–8w
Economic and monetary union 206
Nutrition and health, Children 311–2

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc.
Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill (HL), Rep and 3R (07.06.95) 233, 245–6
Questions
British Rail, Privatisation 616w
Business questions 323

Waller, Mr Gary
Questions
House of Commons debates, Translation services 23w

Walley, Ms Joan
Debates etc.
Coal mine closures (07.06.95) 157–9, 164, 166, 168
Cycling (07.06.95) 145–7, 149
Questions
Bus services 44–6w
Bus services, Darlington 45w
Contracts for services, NHS 496
Cycling 402–3w
HM Coastguard 620–1w
HM Coastguard, North Sea 618–20w
M65 403w
Motor vehicle registration, Computer applications 401w
Ports, Waste disposal 276–7w, 532w
Road accidents, Children 329–30w
Road traffic control 46–7w
Shipping 622w
Shipping, Waste disposal 277w
Traffic areas, Offices 401–2w
Transport supplementary grants 39w

War crimes
Rwanda 285w
Yugoslavia 478w

War pensions
Nuclear weapons tests 196w

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Questions
Local plans, Wales 256w
Police, Divers 258w

Wareing, Mr Robert N
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hostages 480w
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Peace keeping operations 555w
EC Committee of the Regions, Public appointments 600–1w
EC grants and loans, Merseyside 613w
Primary education, Croxteth 638w

Warning signs
Beaches 608w

Warships
Dartmouth royal regatta 192–3w, 438–9w

Warwickshire
GP fundholders 423w
Unemployment 320

Waste disposal
Explosives 377w
Ports 276–7w, 532w
Seas and oceans 377w
Shipping 277w

Water and sewerage companies
111w

Water charges
603w
Sewage 681–2w

Water distribution
South Down 12–4w

Water pollution
AWE Aldermaston 142–3w
Scotland 217w

Waterson, Mr Nigel
Debates etc.
Cyprus (14.06.95) 732, 735–8
Film industry (06.06.95) 27
Questions
Art works, Insurance 200–1w
Dept of National Heritage, Cash limits 200w
Employment discrimination, Older workers 443w
Export credit 605w
National Lottery 572w
Older workers 589

Watson, Mr Mike
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 104–5
Questions
Business questions 898–9
Children, Lead poisoning 43w
Postal services 247w
Sleeping rough, Scotland 151w

Watts, Mr John, Minister of State, Dept of Transport
Questions
A12 399–400w
A14 474w
A38, Road traffic 403w
British Rail, Privatisation 235w, 616w, 622w
Building industry, Dept of Transport 404w
Channel tunnel, Railway network 40w
Channel Tunnel Safety Authority, Annual reports 399w
Dept of Transport, Empty housing 49w
Early retirement, Dept of Transport 235w
Forth rail bridge 473w
Government buildings, Greater London 44w
Land acquisition, Dept of Transport 37w
Lorries, Road damage 403–4w
M6, Road traffic 230w
M6, Road works 228–34w
M65 403w
M66, Lighting 50w
Manchester Airport, Railway network 400w
Motorways 41–2w
Motorways, Noise control 42–3w
Network SouthEast, Rolling stock 615–6w
Newbury bypass 37–8w, 474w
Railway accidents, Cowden 328–9w
Railway closures 276w
Railway fares 474w
Railway maintenance 38w
Railway network, Southern England 531–2w
Railway timetables 235w
Railway transport, Investment 38–9w, 49–50w
Road safety barriers 617–8w
Road traffic, Newbury 615w
Rolling stock 622w
Rolling stock, Railway safety 615w
Urban railways, Government grants to local authorities 531w

Wealth
Financial institutions 262w

Weapons
Air transport 143w
China 9

Welsh Assembly
483, 662–3w

Welsh Development Agency
414w
Bichan, Roy 358w
EC grants and loans 289–90w, 663w
Urban programme 253–4w

Welsh Grand Committee
(14.06.95) 795

Welsh Health Common Services Authority
Directors 490w
Estatecare Group 490–1w, 663w

Welsh Industrial Development Advisory Board
Public appointments 569w

Welsh language
356–7w, 659w
Adult education 405w
Public utilities 71w, 256–7w

Welsh Language Act 1993
Questions
356–7w, 659w

Welsh Office
Complaints against central government 71w
Consultants 68w
Crown immunity 663–4w
Early retirement 255w
Languages 570w
Management consultants 68w
Parliamentary questions 659–60w
Performance standards 71–2w
TACP Architects 414–5w

West Africa
Arms trade 603w

West Coast railway line
18

West Cumbria
Military aircraft 193w

West Midlands
Manufacturing industries 791–2
Regional arts boards 51–2w

West Midlands Police
Disciplinary proceedings 126–7w
Early retirement 126–7w

West Yorkshire
First offenders 480w
Young offenders 480w

Western European Union
219w

Western Sahara
Referenda 208

Weymouth and Portland Borough Council
Bellwin scheme 251w

Whales
Nature conservation 4–6w, 565w

Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John, Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 542–4
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Disabled workers (06.06.95) 123–6
Questions
Civil service manpower, Northern Ireland Office 15w
Civil service recruitment, Northern Ireland 354–6w
Complaints against central government, Northern Ireland Office 550–2w
Consultants, Northern Ireland Office 16w
Contracts for services, Northern Ireland Office 14–5w
Fixed penalties, Belfast 210–1w
Maternity leave, Northern Ireland Office 301–2w
Northern Ireland Office, Cash limits 302w
Northern Ireland Office, Government information services 637w
Performance standards, Northern Ireland Office 548–50w
Police, Codes of practice 363w
Police, Northern Ireland 354w
Police Authority for Northern Ireland, Motor insurance 353w
Public appointments, Northern Ireland 22w
Public service, Offices 16–7w, 347–52w, 467w

Wheeler, Rt Hon Sir John—continued
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Body armour 466w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Police national computer 352w
Young offenders, Death 362w

Whittingdale, Mr John
Questions
Internet, Government departments 380w
Prisoners, Radio programmes 280w

Wholesale trade
Newspaper press 63w, 267w, 577w, 777–8, 794

Wicks, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc.
Low incomes (07.06.95) 180–1
Questions
Bosnia-Herzegovina, Armed conflict 139w

Widdecombe, Miss Ann, Minister of State, Dept of Employment
Questions
Age discrimination 391w
Availability for work 446–8w
Civil service redundancies, Dept of Employment 95w
Complaints against central government, Dept of Employment 100w
Contracts for services, Dept of Employment 96–7w
Council of Europe 95–6w
Disabled workers, Employment opportunities 105w
Disabled workers, Engineering industries 539w
Disabled workers, Epilepsy 386w
Employment 103–4w
Employment discrimination, Older workers 443w
Employment Service Agency 444w
Hard core unemployed 586–7
Hard core unemployed, Barnsley 586–7
Hotel and catering industry, EC Social Charter 443w
International Labour Organisation 95w, 655–6w
Jobclubs 389–90w
Jobfinder's grant 587–8
Jobplan workshops 387–90w
Jobseeker's allowance 102w
Jobseeker's allowance, Nottinghamshire 443w
Jobseeker's allowance, Students 656w
Maternity leave, Dept of Employment 283w
Older workers 588–9
Performance standards, Dept of Employment 98w
Public utilities, Redundancy 587
Restart programme 280–4w, 386–8w
Skill shortages 209w
Vacancies, Age discrimination 390–1w
Vacancies, Barnoldswick 101w

Wigan and Leigh Health Services NHS Trust
NHS charges 308w

Wiggin, Sir Jerry
Questions
Common agricultural policy 308–9

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Questions
Part-time employment, Wales 405w
Skill shortages 209w
Skill shortages, Wales 256w
Welsh Assembly 483

Wigtown Housing Association
169w

Wild animals
Tourism 213w

Wild Mammals (Protection) Bill 1994/95
Questions
345w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Questions
Agricultural subsidies, Spain 313–4
Airlines, Subsidies 318–9
Armed forces, Homosexuality 6
Billing, Company liquidations 790
Business questions 328
EC internal trade 875
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 194

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Questions
Electricity supply industry 423

Williams, Mr Alan W
Questions
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities 479w
Economic situation, Wales 489
Electricity supply industry, Competition 573w
Military aircraft, Low flying 537w
Nuclear power, Privatisation 269w
Nutrition and health, Children 311
Training for work, Dyfed 583

Wilshire, Mr David
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 531–3
Questions
Air transport, First aid 40w
Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, Courage Brewery 65w
Sinn Fein, Social security recipients 22w
Weapons, Air transport 143w

Wilson, Mr Brian
Debates etc.
British Manufacturing and Research Company (13.06.95) 605–6
Questions
Beaches, Warning signs 608w
British Steel Corporation, Hunterston 215w
Charities, Bank services 275w
Crofting, Scotland 170w
Nuclear Electric, Privatisation 65w
Nuclear power, Public appointments 65–6w
Petroleum exploration, Falkland Islands 248w
Post offices, Franchising 456w
Post offices, Supermarkets 456w
Scottish Nuclear, Privatisation 214w
Training, Ayrshire 215w

Windsor Castle
Admission charges 278w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc.
Maxwell, Kevin, Select committee evidence (08.06.95) 339
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 503–4, 517
Parliamentary Constituencies (England) Order (14.06.95) 816
Questions
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Disclosure of information 601w
Arms to Iraq Inquiry, Waldegrave, William 650w
Business questions 327–8, 896
Chartermark scheme 493
Income tax, Self-employed 398–9w
Members' correspondence 335w
Older workers 589
Pay 99–100w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc.
Film industry (06.06.95) 27–8
Housing market (13.06.95) 627–8, 638, 667, 672
Questions
British embassies 198
Foreign investment in UK 575w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Questions
Railway accidents, Cowden 328–9w

Women
Prisoners 123–4w

Women's prisons
Drug crimes 174–6w
Prison overcrowding 174w
Prison sentences 176w
Self-mutilation 174w

Wood, Mr Timothy, Lord Commissioner of the Treasury
Debates etc.
Crown Agents Bill (HL), 2R (06.06.95) 82

Woolf Committee
see Civil Court Procedures Review

Workers' cooperatives
105w

Working hours
Lorry drivers 401w

World Bank
190–1w

World Summit for Social Development
375w, 493w, 502–3w
Education 8w
Educational standards 8w

World War II
Anniversaries 24w

Worthington, Mr Tony
Debates etc.
Northern Ireland (Emergency and Prevention of Terrorism Provisions) (Continuance) Order (12.06.95) 539–41
Questions
A5, Northern Ireland 354w
Angola, Peace keeping operations 221w
East Timor 191w
Further education colleges, Northern Ireland 353–4w, 465–7w
International Fund for Ireland, USA 354w
Kenya, Constitutions 220–1w
Kenya, Members 221w
Liberia, Overseas aid 305w
Police, Northern Ireland 354w
Rwanda, War crimes 285w
Sudan 27w

Wright, Dr Tony
Questions
Bank of England 630w
Industrial democracy 443–4w
Intergovernmental Conference 1996 205

Written questions
Parliamentary recess 186–7w

Yeo, Mr Tim
Questions
EC Social Charter 583

Yorkshire and Humberside
Employment schemes 654w
Intensive care 426w
Listed buildings 605–6w

Young, Mr David
Questions
Defence industries, North West region 148–9w
Gibraltar, Frontiers 203–4

Young, Rt Hon Sir George, Financial Secretary to the Treasury
Questions
Capital gains tax, Tax assessment 515w
Churchill, Winston LS, Archives 94w
Company taxation 393w
Electricity supply industry 419–23
Electronic Data Systems 395w
Fiscal policy 877–8
Fiscal policy, Northern Ireland 878
Housing market 630w
Income tax 82w, 516w
Income tax, Elderly 433w
Income tax, Self-employed 398–9w, 631w
Inheritance tax, Lancashire 265w

Young, Rt Hon Sir George*—*continued
Inheritance tax, Tax rates and bands 266w
Low incomes 516w
Manufacturing industries, Profitability 84w
Married personal allowance 433w, 516w
Minimum wage 878
Oil revenues 204w
Pay, Private sector 630w
Personal equity plans 628w
Personal taxation 628w
Privatisation, Income 266w
Profits 392–4w
Railtrack, Debts 81–2w
Self-employed 89w
Share option scheme 628w
Shareholders 885

Young, Rt Hon Sir George*—*continued
Social Security Contributions Agency, Inland Revenue 516w
Take-home pay 434w
Tax allowances, Art works 340w
Tax allowances, Income tax 205–6w
Taxation, Lancashire 82w
Taxpayers, South East region 266–7w
Treasury, Cash limits 203w

Young offenders
Death 127w, 153–4w, 362w
Lancashire 181–2w
Northern Ireland 362w
Scotland 153–4w, 666–7w
Wales 127w
West Yorkshire 480w

Young people
Cancer 559–60w
Dental health 558w
Education 210w
Employment schemes 653–4w
Income support 645–6w
Training 210w, 448–9w
Wales 569w

Youth unemployment
445w

Yugoslavia
Foreign relations 207
War crimes 478w

Zetland School
212–3w

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY